

The Chronicles of Talislanta



P.D. BREEDING-BLACK © 2005

revised & annotated

The Chronicles of Talislanta

Revised and Annotated

MORRIGAN PRESS INC.





TALISLANTA

FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAME

The Chronicles of Talislanta

revised & annotated

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INTRODUCTION

These are the chronicles of Tamerlin — explorer, self-styled wizard, and obscure author of ancient times. Within, the wizard recounts the tales of his travels throughout the strange and mysterious land known as Talislanta. It is believed that these writings were compiled by Tamerlin himself, who—being inclined towards romanticism—may have enlarged somewhat on the details of his epic journey. Nevertheless, his works are perhaps of some interest, if only for their value as curios of a bygone age.

According to his accounts, Tamerlin spent the greater part of fourteen years exploring the Talislantan continent. During this time he often traveled alone, typically in the guise of a collector of odd artifacts, though there is some evidence to suggest that Tamerlin may have attempted to pass himself off as a quack doctor or charlatan when the mood suited him. On occasion, he was accompanied by one or more fellow wayfarers: the rogue magician Crystabal, a tattooed Thrall warrior named Ramm, a bestial Jaka mercenary called Tane, a beautiful Mandalan savant named Zen, a Druas known to the wizard as Shadowmoon, and Orianos, a swashbuckling sea-rogue, are all mentioned in the chronicles. Setheria, a Thaecian enchantress commissioned by Tamerlin to provide illustrations for his text, may also have had to endure the wizard's company for a time.

The maps and diagrams which appear in the text were commissioned by Tamerlin, and may be of similarly dubious utility. The city guides in particular seem to have been compiled in a randomly haphazard fashion, and should by no means be considered complete. Rather, it would appear that Tamerlin noted only those features and references which he deemed important, or possibly, interesting. The inclusion of certain less-than-reputable establishments in these city guides may be construed to be an indicator of Tamerlin's habits and preferences, or of those which the wizard ascribed to his readers.

Since his seminal work first saw widespread release some twenty years ago, the face of Talislanta has changed. Of primary importance has been the change in government in the now-defunct Quan Empire. For the sake of accuracy, Tamerlin's travelogue is presented here in its entirety. Various scholars, merchants and travellers have added their own notes and comments to this work with the goal of making it relevant to the modern traveler. These notes will be presented as

sidebars to Tamerlin's work. To learn more of these commentator, see Appendix A at the end of this book.

Tamerlin, evidently anticipating the skepticism of future generations of scholars, had only this to say in defense of his work: *"As to the authenticity or value of my writings, I leave it to the reader to decide. Know only this: Talislanta exists, for I have been there, if only in dreams."*

A SYNOPSIS OF TAMERLIN'S TRAVELS

The following is an outline of Tamerlin's travels across the continent of Talislanta. Due to the greatly disorganized condition of the wizard's notes and folios, an accurate and complete chronology of events regarding this period may be deemed a practical impossibility.

1) Tamerlin arrives in Talislanta. A stranger in a strange land, he mistakes Aaman for the ancient kingdom of Phaedra, and unknowingly commits a series of indiscretions which earn him the enmity of the Aamanian theocracy. Forced to flee for his life, the wizard accepts a five-year term of indentured servitude to an Arimite caravan master. He is smuggled out of Ammahd in the dead of night.

2) Tamerlin, working as an indentured caravan driver, tours Arim. His caravan stops at the citadel of Akbar, where the wizard views firsthand an attack by the monstrous Ur clans of neighboring Urag. In the ensuing confusion and activity, Tamerlin commandeers a steed and makes a discreet exit into the surrounding hills.

3) Some weeks later, Tamerlin arrives in Zanth, capitol of Zandu. He meets Orianos, a swashbuckling sea-farer who regales the wizard with tales of his dashing exploits. For a short time, Tamerlin stays in Zanth, earning a living by working as a professional seer and mystic. Prior circumstances in Aaman and Arim cause him to revise his plans; setting aside his fear of waterborne travel, the wizard obtains passage on a Zandir merchant ship headed to Faradun.

4) Enroute to Faradun, the Zandir vessel is set upon by sea-rogues from the Isle of Gao-Din. It is uncertain whether or not Tamerlin is surprised to learn that the pirates' captain is Orianos. After divesting all passengers of their valuables, the sea-rogues allow the Zandir ship to continue on to Faradun.

into the northeastern wastelands.

12) Tamerlin, with Shadowmoon, visits L'Haan.

13) Tamerlin follows Shadowmoon to Narandu. After this trip, the two part company at the border of Sindar.

14) Tamerlin travels to Cymril. Here he again meets Crystabal, who has come to be known in Cymril as "the rogue magician." They spend long days together, partaking of the finest foods and wines, and engaging in lengthy discussions concerning their future plans. Soon neither has any money left. In order to eat, Tamerlin and Crystabal take work with a penurious Kasmir money lender, who offers to finance an expedition to Mog in order to acquire a shipment of costly magical herbs. Tamerlin, by virtue of his experience, is assigned to lead the group. Included in their number is Ramm, a Thrall warrior hired to serve as the party's guide.

15) Tamerlin and his party travel to the Swamplands of Mog. They purchase the herbs as instructed, but take pity on the dull-witted Mogroth, whom the Kasmir financier intended to cheat. Tamerlin pays a fair price to the Mogroth, choosing instead to renege on his contract with the Kasmir. The wizard and rogue magician decide to make for Tabal, in Jhangara, from whence they hope to obtain passage to Zandu. Perplexed, Ramm returns back home to Taz of the Seven Kingdotns.

16) Enroute to Tabal, Tamerlin and Crystabal are taken by Imrian slavers. They are rescued by a band of sea-rogues from the Isle of Gao-Din, led by the estimable Orianos. On orders from their captain, the sea-rogues convey Tamerlin and Crystabal to the coasts of Silvanus.

17) Tamerlin, with Crystabal, visits the Sarista gypsy peoples. The rogue magician convinces the wizard to accompany him on a quest to locate the Lost City of the Dead in Khazad.

18) The quest to Khazad ends in frustration. Crystabal and Tamerlin part company; the rogue magician retiring to the city of Zanth, while Tamerlin, instilled with wanderlust, travels alone to the Zandir outpost of Zandre. Here, the wizard meets Tane, a mercenary Jaka hunter.

19) Tamerlin and Tane go forth into the forests of Werewood in search of the tomb of an ancient Phaedran wizard. Logistical difficulties force a temporary postponement of their ultimate goal, necessitating the

formulation of a new strategy.

20) Tamerlin convinces a reluctant Tane to accompany him on a hazardous voyage to the Lost Sea, in Yrmania. They endure great hardships, but uncover a rich cache of sunken treasure, and so are rewarded for their efforts. Taking as much of the booty as their mounts can bear, the two adventurers turn to the south and make for the Zandu border.

21) Tamerlin and Tane return to the border outpost of Zandre. The wizard, with his new-found wealth, makes preparations for a sojourn to the eastern lands. Tane declines to attend, citing pressing business in Arim. The two go their separate ways.

22) Tamerlin, in the guise of a curio dealer, ventures forth on a journey that will take him to the far corners of the Talislantan continent. Little is known of his travels until he reaches Dracarta.

23) Following an ill-advised expedition into the Red Desert, Tamerlin joins up with a nomadic tribe of Djaffir merchants. The Djaffir, with the wizard in tow, make for the citadel of Hadran on the Quan border.

24) Having survived an encounter with the hostile armies of Rajanistan, Tamerlin and the Djaffir cross the bridge at Hadran and enter the land of Quan. The nomads sell their wares and make ready to return to Djaffa, but Tamerlin obtains a merchants' visa, allowing him to travel the Emperor's Road to the northern sectors of Quan.

25) Tamerlin is taken to Tian, capitol of Quan, by a troop of elite Kang warriors. Here, the wizard learns that he has been chosen to travel the length and breadth of Quan at the behest of the Emperor of Quan. Zen, a charming Mandalan savant enslaved by the Quan, is assigned to be Tamerlin's guide. Twenty elite Kang warriors accompany them, affording a grim reminder of the involuntary nature of their assignment. For the next three years, the wizard explores the far corners of the empire, compiling notes and collecting various sorts of curios and artifacts along the way.

26) An incident involving the Witchmen of Chana allows Tamerlin and Zen to terminate their respective arrangements with the Quan Empire. Without delay they head westwards. A long and arduous journey follows, the details of which seem somehow to have been omitted (or deleted) from Tamerlin's notes. It is logical to suppose that the wizard and his female companion made their way to Anasa, or perhaps Hadj;

from there, the two may have crossed the Dead River at Danuvia or Kasmir, heading west across the Seven Kingdoms. On the other hand, one cannot rule out the possibility that Tamerlin's escape was facilitated in some way by magic.

27) Tamerlin and Zen arrive in Zanth, the capitol of Zandu. The wizard is reunited with the rogue magician Crystabal, and the three discuss future plans over many a glass of Zandir wine.

TALISLANTA: A TRAVELER'S OVERVIEW

To the neophyte traveler or explorer, the Talislantan continent and its surroundings present nearly unlimited opportunities for discovery and adventure. Conversely, the possibilities of disaster are at least as numerous, particularly for those unfamiliar with the many unusual races, cultures and creatures native to this realm. The foreigner is best advised to avoid incautious behavior at all costs; keeping a keen eye out for signs of trouble, tactfully acceding to the customs and beliefs of the natives (no matter how odd or irrational these may seem), and maintaining a degree of civility and decorum in public places. Traveling in groups of trustworthy companions, wielding cogent magics, and/or carrying concealed weapons on one's person are also advisable, unless one prefers trusting all to luck. Other factors which may be of interest to the prospective Talislantan traveler are listed below, as follows:

Currency: The gold lumen, minted to traditional specifications by most of the civilized nations on the continent, is the standard coin of the realm. A single gold lumen is equivalent in value to ten silver pieces, or one hundred copper pieces.

Roadways: Beyond the walls of even the largest Talislantan cities one often finds little but wilderness and intractable terrain. In many such regions, safe and reliable roadways are practically non-existent, a situation which can turn even the most mundane seeming journey into an exercise in survival techniques. Particularly unsafe is the so-called Wilderlands Road, an ancient and decrepit affair which runs from the eastern border of Kasmir (of the Seven Kingdoms) through the Wilderlands of Zaran and the desert kingdoms of Djaffa, Carantheum, and Raj. Traveling the Wilderness Road is best done in the company of a large and well-armed caravan, this due to the presence of Beastmen, Za bandit gangs, and other malicious predators.

In the west, the old Phaedran Causeway is better patrolled, if somewhat haphazardly maintained. The Causeway runs from Zandu through Aaman, terminating at the western border of the Seven Kingdoms. A modest toll is charged at the Great Barrier Wall, which separates the two rival nations of Aaman and Zandu.

The Seven Kingdoms has its own system of roadways, known as the Seven Roads. Aside from its rather unimaginative acronym, the system is of good quality, at least by Talislantan standards. Delays are to be expected at all border crossings, the addlebrained rulers of this confederation of minor city states being unable to coordinate such things as tolls, detours, curfews, and so forth.

The Emperor's Road, which winds its way through the eastern territories of the Quan Empire (*now the Kang Empire*), is the only thoroughfare on the continent which offers a semblance of security and convenience on a regular basis. Designed and built by subjects of the Quan, the roadway is always well maintained. Foreigners must pay a prohibitive toll of five gold lumens at all bridges and city gates, a stricture intended to discourage traveling musicians, peddlers, and other undesirables from traipsing about the Empire.

***Note:** This is still accurate although the Kang have lowered the toll to 2 gold lumens in an attempt to increase merchant traffic to fund their various military campaigns.*

— Quen

Seas and Waterways: The Axis River, in the west, and the River Shan, in the east, are both important waterways, and are used extensively by the peoples of these regions. A number of lesser rivers, lakes and inland seas are also considered navigable, and are covered in greater detail further on in the text. With the exception of the Imrian slavers, a race of amphibious humanoids, few Talislantan sailors dare to venture into open waters, a phobia not entirely attributable to mere superstition. The various seas and oceans surrounding the continent virtually teem with dangerous creatures and roving Corsair bands. Accordingly, most Talislantan sea vessels navigate by hugging the coastline.

Modes of Conveyance: Aside from the slow but reliable expedient of pedal ambulation, many forms of overland conveyance are available to the Talislantan traveler. In any fair-sized city, there is generally little difficulty in

obtaining a mount at reasonable cost. Swiftest of steeds are the creatures called Silvermanes, followed by their cousins, the Snowmane and Greymane. In arid or desert climes, the Ontra, Batra, or Tatra are most suitable. Land lizards, stubborn but powerful quadrupeds from the Wilderlands of Zaran, are best suited to the towing of carriages or wagons. Those of discerning tastes and solvent finances may prefer the comfort of a slave-borne litter or palanquin. In Carantheum, dune ships and land barges are quite popular.

Various types of water craft, some reasonably priced, are available in many parts of Talislanta. Barges and flat bottomed skiffs are ideal for navigating rivers and lakes, reed boats or makeshift rafts often sufficing in places where larger craft cannot go. The finest sailing ships are probably the Dragon Barques of the Quan Empire built by the subject Sunra peoples. The Imrians' Coracles, drawn by giant Kra (sightless cave eels), are seaworthy but difficult to manage. The Zandir, Aamanians and Farad make serviceable galleys, though these require large teams of slaves to man the oars. The capabilities of the ominous sailing vessels of the Black Savants, like their mysterious owners, remain largely unknown.

Where methods of land and water travel fail, there is always the possibility of obtaining passage on a windship. Both the magicians of Cymril (of the Seven Kingdoms) and Phantas know the secret of making these wondrous vessels, which traverse the air as sailing ships do the water. They are so costly to make and maintain, however, that few can afford to own such magnificent craft. Only slightly less expensive are crested dragons, which make fierce and loyal steeds if captured and trained while still young. Ungainly and foul-tempered, Dractyl can be found amidst the wastelands of Harak. As the bloodthirsty Harakin tribes also dwell here, it is easy to rationalize not making the long and arduous journey to this isolated region.

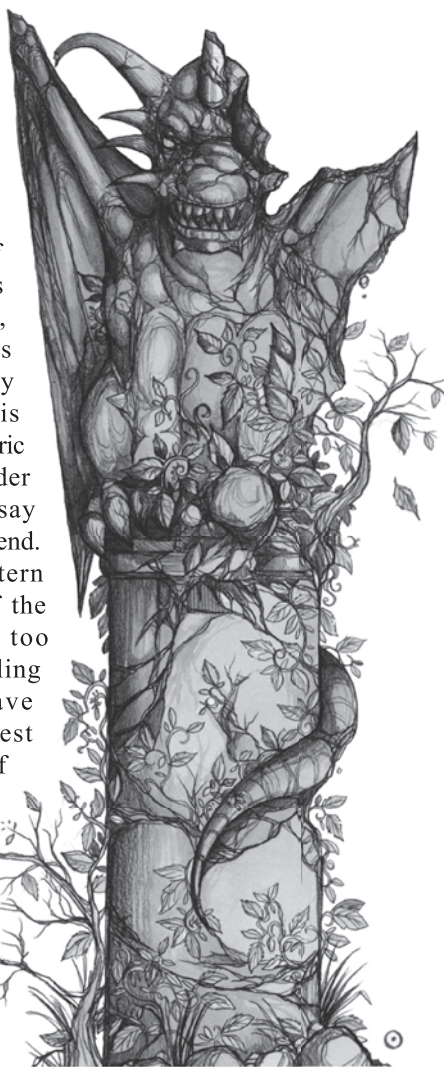
HISTORY OF TALISLANTA

The history of Talislanta, I am afraid to say, is somewhat less than certain, particularly as concerns the land's distant past. The reason for the distinct lack of reliable data regarding ancient times can probably be attributed to the occurrence of a most unfortunate event, referred to by Talislantan scholars as "the Great Disaster" (or, less commonly, "the Fatal Miscalculation," "Rodinn's Blunder," "the Unconscionable Oversight," and so forth). The cause of the Great Disaster remains a source of heated debate among Talislantan scholars. The most common explanations include a terrible

war between the two ancient kingdoms of Sursia and Acimera, a combination of plagues, natural disasters, and other misfortunes, or the ill-advised tamperings of an incompetent wizard named Rodinn (see WILDERLANDS OF ZARAN; The Aberrant Forest).

Whatever its cause (or causes), the Great Disaster brought a swift end to what is now appropriately referred to as the Forgotten Age, eradicating all traces of this ancient era save for the seemingly countless ruins and desolate regions found to this day throughout much of the Talislantan continent.

As for the rest of Talislantan history: I have endeavored to construct a brief chart illustrating the chronology of various events deemed significant by those scholars whom I chanced to encounter in my travels. All dates are based upon the ancient Phaedran calendar, the Phaedrans having been among the first folk to again attain a relative degree of civilization following the Great Disaster. It is true that the Ariane of Altan are an older race, but their method of time-keeping (involving the positions of Talislanta's two suns and seven moons, among countless other, marginally relevant factors) is perhaps a bit too esoteric for the casual reader to appreciate, to say nothing of comprehend. The Mazdak, eastern contemporaries of the Phaedrans, were too occupied with killing each other to have taken much interest in the procession of historical events, and so, are of little help to the hopeful chronicler of Talislantan history.



YEAR	EVENT
1	Beginning of "The New Age" The city-state of Phaedra is established. The Orthodoxist and Paradoxist cults vie for control of the new state, but moderates choose the wizard Soliman III to be the first ruler of Phaedra. A period of lasting prosperity follows, lasting some hundred and ten years.
21	The Mirin of L'Haan build the ice cities of L'Lal and Rhin.
29	The nomadic Dracartan tribes settle in the Red Desert, a region considered inhospitable by most other peoples. In the same year they discover vast deposits of red iron. Djaffir merchants establish a trade route to Phaedra and work is begun on the city of Dracarta.
48	Mazdaks finally kill each other off, leaving the barbaric Quan tribes in control of their old territories.
67	The Darkling hordes of Urag, fleeing the Ur clans, invade the territories of the Gnomekin. The Gnomekin hide underground until daybreak, then emerge in force and drive the Darklings back to their own shadowy lands. Called the One Day War, the incident promotes considerable laughter amongst the Gnomekin for months to come.
71	Soliman III, ruler of Phaedra, succumbs to old age. A period of mourning lasting twenty years is decreed by his successor, the magician Damon.
77	Phaedrans annex territories occupied by the Aeriad, who flee to the forests of what is now Vardune.
82	The Quan conquer the Vajra.
91	End of the twenty years mourning in Phaedra: Damon decrees a twenty-year period of celebration to follow, but is clapped in irons and branded a lunatic. Orthodoxists and Paradoxists again vie for power, but the sorcerer, Kabros is chosen to rule Phaedra. Privately, he tells friends that the city-state is on the verge of collapse, and advises against making long-term plans regarding the acquisition of property, among other things.
97	Imrian vessels raid the Dark Coast for the first time, taking many slaves.
101	Religious uprisings rock Phaedra on the city-state's hundredth anniversary. The Sorcerer Kabros resigns as ruler. In a stirring speech to his supporters, primarily magicians, wizards, and other sorcerers, Kabros advises them to consider "an exit, and a hasty one at that." By the following morning, he is sipping nectar on the Isle of Thaecia. Fearing for their lives, his advisors disguise one of their number as Kabros, successfully maintaining this ruse for over eleven years.
107	The Quan, using Vajra engineers and laborers, dam the River Shan, forcing the Sunra to surrender. Using Sunra vessels, the Quan take the Mandalan city of Jacinthe just one month later.
112	Kabros' advisors, their trickery finally uncovered, are forced to flee for their lives. The Orthodoxists seize control of the state, ordering dissidents to be incarcerated in the wilderness penal colony, Gao-Din. Beginning of the Cult Wars with the Paradoxists.
119	The Ur clans of Urag conquer and enslave the Darklings, then join forces with the avian Stryx.
122	The Quan bribe the Kang warchieftains, and establish the Quan Empire. The capital city of Tian is built by conquered Mandalans and Vajra, and the empire begins to prosper.
133	The penal colony of Gao-Din is abandoned by the Phaedrans, and the rogue city of Gao is established soon afterwards.
148	The Phandre, a race of magicians exiled from the city-state of Phaedra, establish the free state of Cymril. Treaties are signed with the Thralls of Taz and the Gnomekin of Durne. The Farad establish a settlement in Faradun.
158	The Arimites build the ramshackle mining installation of Shattrra and declare it the capital of the nation of Arim.
161	Za bandits and Beastmen contend for the border regions of Zaran.

176	Ice Giants attack L'Haan, but are driven back by the Mirin, who have discovered the secret of making adamant.
188	Mandalan mystics escape from the Quan Empire and flee into the Opal Mountains. Most are slain by Harakin tribesmen and frostweres, but a few survive the journey and discover the Temple of the Seven Moons in Xanadas. The Farad build, the port city of Tarun.
193	Beastmen launch attacks against the settlements of the Sindarans and Kasmirans. Beginning of the Beast Wars.
207	The Dracartans of Caranthemum rediscover the lost art of thaumaturgy.
222	The Kasmirans, Sindarans, and Aeriad sign treaties with the Cymrilian alliance. At the last minute, the Muses of Astar also decide to sign, and the confederation of states known as the Seven Kingdoms is established. The Beastmen beat a hasty retreat back across the Plains of Golarin.
231	Armies of the Kang drive the Nagra tribes out of the Quan Empire.
237	The Arimites, who have become wealthy by supplying black iron to the warring Phaedran cultists, build the citadel of Akbar.
245	Gryphs from the forests of Tamaranth, suffering from a plague of gange, are cured by the magics of the Ariane. The Gryphs never forget this act of kindness from the strange folk of the maze city, vowing to remain always the protectors of the Ariane race.
267	Imrian slavers attempt to sack the rogue city of Gao, but are repulsed. Hereafter,, the Sea Rogues harass Imrian vessels at every opportunity,
292	Sea Nomads build the floating city of Oceanus.
300	Jhangarans build crude settlements at Karansk and Tabal.
318	The Ur clans invade Yrmania.
321	Shabul, King of Arim, is slain by Revenant Cultists.
334	The Ur, mired in a long and pointless war with the Wildmen of Yrmania, withdraw in disgust to their homeland.
350	Irnrian slavers first encounter the Black Savants of Nefaratus. After losing many vessels, the Imrians strike a secret deal, and are thereafter allowed to pass through Nefaratan waters by specified routes only. Beginning of slave trade with the Quan Empire. The Mirin of L'Haan repulse an invading army of barbaric Harakin in a fierce battle that lasts for three days and nights.
366	Thousands die in a bloody sea battle waged by opposing cult forces for control of the Phaedran Gulf. Hereafter, the gulf is known as the Sea of Sorrow.
383	Armies of the Quan Empire plunge north into Harak, hoping to establish a safe route to L'Haan, which is rich in blue diamonds and adamant. Fierce bands of Harakin, mounted on winged dractyls, oppose them every step of the way. Finally, the Kang commanders order their forces to withdraw convinced that the prize is not worth the effort.
400	Xanadas, the great mystic founder of the Temple of Seven Moons and father of the country Xanadas, leaves his followers, vowing on his deathbed to return after visiting with the gods. Beginning of "The Long Wait."
404	Nomads of Raj unite under the necromancer Urmaan after a series of drawn-out desert campaigns. Employing slave labor, the Rajans build the fortified citadel of Irdan.
422	Kang forces turn back an army of Witch folk from Chana. Beginning of the Quarn Border Wars.
432	Saurans from the Volcanic Hills invade the Quan Empire. Mounted on armored land dragons, the Saurans advance slowly but inexorably towards the capital of Tian. Only the early onset of winter stops the Saurans, the cold weather forcing them to return to their more temperate homeland. Immediately following this disastrous incident, the Emperor of Quan orders his Kang commanders to undertake the swift construction of fortified border outposts and heavy siege engines as insurance against further assaults.

433	The Sauran armies return in the spring, but are unable to penetrate the Kang's new and hastily constructed defenses. Dismayed, the Saurans return to the Volcanic Hills.
444	Sheiks of the Djaffir bandit tribes arrive in Carantheum. They report that Urmaan of Raj is amassing an army of slave warriors along the southern borders of the Wilderlands, presumably in preparation for an assault on the citadel of Dracarta. Abas the Gray, a Dracartan thaumaturge noted for his quirk wit, tells the Djaffir he would appreciate Urmaan better were he to amass an army of slave girls instead." Not amused, the Djaffir hurl Abas out a window to his death. The Dracartans get the point and promise to keep a close watch on the situation.
445	Armies of the Rajans launch an attack on Dracarta, the southernmost of Carantheum's outposts. The Dracartans, warned in advance by the Djaffir sheiks, annihilate the Rajan armies with relative ease. When news of the crushing defeat reaches Tarun, Urmaan has his entire staff of generals boiled in oil. Urmaan then disappears, never to be heard from again. A high priest of Raj uses the incident to his advantage, claiming that Urmaan has gone to visit the entity known as Death, from whom he seeks advice and guidance on how to defeat the people of Carantheum. The idea so catches the fancy of the gullible Rajan populace that Death becomes the nation's patron "deity." A morbid cult springs up around the high priest, who becomes the first Khadun or mystic ruler of the Rajans.
451	The Seven Kingdoms build the Seven Roads, encouraging trade between each of the member nations.
476	Death of the first Khadun of Raj by unknown causes. A new Khadun claims his predecessor has "gone to seek Urmaan. The Rajan death cultists are thereafter known as the "Followers of Urmaan."
480	Independent city-states of Danuvia, Maruk, and Hadj are built by Phaedran exiles.
493	Ice Giants enter the forests of Tamaranth and find the Ariane High Masters waiting for them. Employing their potent magics, the Ariane hasten the often slow process of spiritual ascendancy, enabling the invading Ice Giants to immediately enter into their next incarnations as puddles of water.
500	The Rajans, led by the Khadun himself, attack Dracarta in force. Routed by Dracartan duneships, the Rajans are torn to pieces as they flee madly across the desert sands. The Khadun is captured alive and plated with red iron by Dracartan thaumaturges. His statue-like form is displayed in the capitol of Carantheum, where it decorates the Royal Palace. The battle comes to be known as the Massacre at Dracarta.
512	Exhausted after four hundred years of continuous warfare, the Orthodoxist and Paradoxist cults declare a truce. After a brief council, they agree to divide the old Phaedran territories into two separate nations. Zandu, to the west, becomes home to the Paradoxists. Aaman, to the east, is occupied by the Orthodoxists. Construction is begun on the Great Barrier Wall.
519	The Great Barrier Wall is completed; the Zandir and Aaman work together to erect this massive structure in only seven years.
538	Fierce Mangar corsairs begin to harass the dragon barques of the Quan Empire.
553	Ur clans from the fortress city of Krag pour into the gorge at Akbar but are unable to penetrate the Arimites' strong defenses. They fall back to make new plans.
570	Imrians raid Mog for slaves, and sail upriver as far as Astar in search of Muses. They find an army of Thralls from Taz instead, and are driven down the Axis river and into the Azure Ocean. In the same year a large contingent of Imrians attempt to take the Isle of Thaecia, but are easily repulsed by the magics of the Thaecian enchanters.
600	Tamerlin writes his Chronicles of Talislanta.

Recent History

601	A new Wizard King is elected by popular decree in Cymril. He is known for his liberal policies, and is viewed with great distaste by the arch-conservative Tanasian ethnic minority.
602	Imrian slavers annex the Isle of Batre.
603	A trio of Tanasians attempts to restore the old regime to power in Cymril. They fall when the Lyceum Arcanum comes out in support of the Wizard King. The Lyceum's secret archives are opened, and the Tanasian's discredited. Nymandre is tried and convicted of treason; he is placed in stasis and imprisoned in an impermeable orb. Ebonarde feels to parts unknown, while Naryx of the Gloved Hand disappears – some say he is hiding in the jungles of Chana.
604	Members of the Lyceum Arcanum begin' deciphering the contents of the secret archives. They discover the Archaen Codex, an ancient book of occult lore that contains the lost magical secrets of a bygone age.
605	Faradun is acknowledged the wealthiest of all Talislantan states. Despite denials by the ruling Kral, it is widely believed that Farad prosperity stems from the illegal sale of weapons to the Imrians and Rajans, as well as the lucrative euphorica trade.
607	Sindarans discover the remains of an unknown vessel in the dusty soil of the Lost Sea. It is theorized that Talislanta was once home to a port city that may have attracted ships from other worlds, or other dimensions.
608	In Raj a new Khadun, an assassin-mage backed by factions of the violent Nihilist Cult, seizes power after a bloody coup. The new Khadun declares his intention to wage a dark war against the nation of Carantheum.
609	A consortium of Farad monopolists takes a great interest in the independent city-state of Hadj. Hadj begins to gain a reputation as an exclusive resort for the wealthy. Certain of the Hadjin Tombs are acquired by the Farad consortium, and are closed to the general public.
610	The Farad develop windship arcanology, claiming to have obtained this knowledge from the Hadjin Tombs; others believe the secret was stolen from the Cymrilians.
611	The Hierophant Omnus I comes to power in Aaman. In the Quan Empire, a movement known as the Silent Insurrection has begun.
612	Farad windships, sailing south beyond the continent of Talislanta claim to encounter windships piloted by the Baratus --dreaded skyborne pirates from ancient times. These ships are described as similar in make to Phantasian warships.
613	An individual claiming to be the Tirshata appears before the annual conclave of the Za bandit clans. By the end of the conclave, he has eliminated eleven of the most powerful chieftains and consolidated control of all the Za clans under his banner. The Za clans are united for the first time since the Age of Confusion.
615	The Sultan of Zandu is assassinated by Heterodoxist cultists. His son, Faryan, is appointed as his successor.
618	Mandalan refugees arrive in the Seven Kingdoms, claiming that the Kang have quietly usurped control of the Quan Empire from the ruling-class Quan, whom they have chosen to retain as puppet dictators. Their claims are disputed until the Kang mobilize a massive force against their old enemies the Saurans of the Volcanic Hills in an operation long opposed by the Quan, who had previously elected to hoard the empire's resources for themselves.
619	Dracartan scouts report that the Rajans have begun to develop a rudimentary form of windship arcanology. The Farad are suspected of selling secrets to the Rajans. In response, the Seven Kingdoms and Carantheum suspend all trade ties with the Farad.
620	Rumor has it that the Tirshata is negotiating a possible pact of alliance with the Beastmen, as the Sub-Men tribes begin to gather in the Wilderlands.
621	Proven a fraud, the fledgling army of the Tirshata disbands with the fall of their charismatic leader. War is narrowly averted.



AAMAN

Aaman is a land of low hills and wooded glens, bordered to the east by the Axis River and to the west by the Sea of Sorrow. Formerly part of the old Phaedran Empire, Aaman became an independent nation following the long and bloody Cult Wars, which pitted the Orthodoxists against the Paradoxists of neighboring Zandu (see History of Talislanta).

The Aamanians are a stern folk, tall and straight of bearing. They have skin the color of cinnabar, with sculpted features and deep green eyes. As required by the arch-conservative tenets of Orthodoxy, Aamanians are taught to refrain from individualistic behavior. Only the most modest attire is deemed permissible: colorless smocks, robes designed to conceal the figure, and caps of starched linen are worn by much of the populace.

In order to promote the Orthodoxist ideal of “oneness in body and spirit,” Aamanians use an extract of the bald nettle plant to remove all facial and bodily hair, and cultivate a certain sameness of appearance and mannerism. In many lands, they are regarded as the most monotonous folk in Talislanta.

The doctrines of Orthodoxy center on the Aamanians’ patron deity Aa (also known as “Aa the Omnipotent,” “Aa the Omnificent,” and so on). The tenets of the cult are recorded in a series of iron-bound volumes known cumulatively as “the Omnival.” Written over the course of many generations by Aaman’s ruling theocracy, the Omnival purports to reveal “the answers to all questions and mysteries; the secret knowledge of Aa; the correct manner of achieving ordered thought; the hundred and more proscriptions against infidels, heretics, witches and the like: what the Omnival does not teach, the true Orthodoxist

need not know.”

Strict adherence to the inflexible tenets of Orthodoxy dominates life in Aaman. Artisans are prohibited from producing works which in any way deviate from accepted standards. The cubiform structures which pass for Aamanian architecture are all identical in appearance, and their cities are laid out in monotonous, square grids.

Aamanian customs are similarly bland. Conditioned from childhood to conform to acceptable patterns of speech and behavior, Aamanians converse mainly in clichés and axioms. Disagreement with Orthodoxist doctrine is considered tantamount to heresy, and may result in unpleasant consequences. Public displays of affection are forbidden in Aaman, as are intoxicants of any kind. The latter proscription is a particular source of dismay to merchants, travelers and those individuals who must, for one reason or another, spend any amount of time in this tedious and unexciting locale.

The Aamanians have a rigid caste system based upon the acquisition and accumulation of mana, or “spiritual purity.” At the head of Aaman’s theocracy is the Hierophant, celibate high priest of the realm, who is possessed of unlimited mana. The Hierophant wields supreme power in Aaman, for he is entrusted with sole curatorship of the Omnival. At his decree, the Omnival may be expanded to include such strictures and observances as the Hierophant sees fit to impose upon the populace.

Serving the Hierophant are his representatives, called the Monitors. Only warrior-priests or Archimagés who have earned a minimum of one thousand points of mana can attain this lofty status. Each Monitor serves as the ruling prelate of an assigned district, and is responsible for awarding mana points to those worthy of advancement in status, or deducting points from individuals whom they deem unworthy. Many are the sons and daughters of wealthy merchants who have served the theocracy for years.

Next in line come the Aspirants. These individuals are divided into ten “orders”, each separated by


one hundred-point increments (thus, an Aspirant of the First Order must have earned a minimum of one hundred mana points, an Aspirant of the Second Order must acquire at least two hundred points, and so on). Aspirants who have gained Tenth Order status are eligible for promotion to the status of Monitor, though few ever attain such an exalted position. Individuals who have a mana total of “zero” or less are considered pariahs, and have status comparable to an infidel. In Aaman, all slaves and criminals fall into this category.

Advancement in status is a preoccupation with the Aamanians, who believe that their position in the Orthodoxist hierarchy determines how they will fare in the afterlife. Accordingly, the attainment of mana points is considered of primary importance. The most reliable method of accomplishing this goal, provided one can pay the high cost of tuition, is to enter the priesthood and study to become an Archimage. Temples offering instruction in this field can be found in any city in Aaman.

A less costly means of attaining enlightenment is to join the Knights of the Theocratic Order, the militant arm of the Orthodoxist cult. Attired in shining white armor (actually, black iron plate mail covered with a glossy white lacquer), the Knights of the Theocratic Order serve as protectors of the realm, and are under the direct command of the Hierophant. They are employed in all branches of the army and navy, and may be assigned to travel to distant lands to hunt down and persecute “enemies of the faith” (namely, witches, warlocks and others who do not share the Orthodoxists’ narrow-minded views, known as heretics).

Less ambitious members of the cult sometimes find it easier to simply purchase mana by making donations to one of the many temples of Aa found in Aaman. The going rate for this form of enlightenment is one hundred gold lumens per point of mana; a not-insubstantial price, even considering the purported benefits to the soul. “All-seeing eye” medallions, statues of Aa, and other reliquary may also be purchased from the temples, with the same purported result.

Because few Aamanians can afford to acquire



mana by such convenient means, the most popular way to achieve elevated status is to undertake a pilgrimage to one of the cult's officially sanctioned holy places. In order of esteem, these are: the Well of Saints, which lies beyond the Volcanic Hills; the Watchstone, situated amidst the Plains of Golarin; the Red Desert in Carantheum and several places of lesser repute. Returning with some item or substance native to the holy place is required in order to gain the recognition of the Monitors, who verify all claims and tabulate the accumulation of mana necessary to advance in status.

There are three large cities in Aaman, all of which look much the same. Arat is a port city which once served as a naval installation during the Cult Wars with neighboring Zandu. Aamanian warships are still stationed here, though the facility is now used primarily by merchant vessels. The citadel of Andurin is a center for trade and an important military base. The Knights of the Theocratic Order maintain a sizeable force in the walled city, which is also a popular stopover point for pilgrims headed to the eastern lands.

Ammahd is the capitol of Aaman, and the center of all trade, commerce and culture. The Hierophant lives here in a mighty tower ivory-colored stone, attended by his most trusted advisors. Far below, thousands of low-ranking Aspirants and infidels toil, loading wagons and canal-barges with shipments of ore and precious stones from Arim. These are conveyed eastward in the caravans of the Orthodoxist ore-traders, as per the Hierophant's dictates. Profits are tallied by the Monitors, and stored for safe-keeping in the Hierophant's tower, which is heavily guarded by the Knights of the Theocratic Order.

Ammahd is located adjacent to the Aaman-Zandu border, and overlooks the most bizarre and spectacular structure in the region: The Great Barrier Wall. Stretching the entire length of the border with Zandu, the wall is an immense stone structure, sixty feet in height and half as wide at its base. It was built following the Cult Wars of ancient Phaedra, a series of religious conflicts that pitted the Orthodoxist cult against their bitter rivals, the Paradoxists. After centuries of

senseless and bloody warfare, the leaders of the two cults agreed to a truce of sorts. Two separate nations were established: the Orthodoxist state of Aaman, and the Paradoxist Sultanate of Zandu. All hostilities were brought to an end in order that each country might rebuild its population and resources which had been badly depleted by the long war. The two countries then worked together to erect a great wall, bisecting the old Phaedran capitol of Badijan and establishing an official border. Both sides agreed that the Great Barrier Wall (as it was to be called) would be maintained forever as a symbol of the irreconcilable differences between the two nations.

The Great Barrier Wall is open to travelers of all races and nationalities, though a toll is charged at each of its three gates (one gold lumen per person, animal, or conveyance). Proprietorship of the wall and its toll facilities are determined on a yearly basis by a clash of champions. Both the Aamanians and the Zandir expend a considerable amount of effort searching for a suitable champion for the year's match, the outcome of which is worth a small fortune in revenues. There are a few minor restrictions: quadrupeds are barred from competing in the event, as are demons of any sort. Otherwise, practically anything goes.

Held atop the Great Barrier Wall, with spectators on both sides applauding their country's champion, the event is quite an attraction in the region. People from many lands come here just to see the clash of champions, bringing a substantial amount of -business to the innkeepers, shop-owners, and vendors of both lands. Betting is always brisk, and pick-pockets from neighboring regions consider the event to be something on the order of a religious festival.

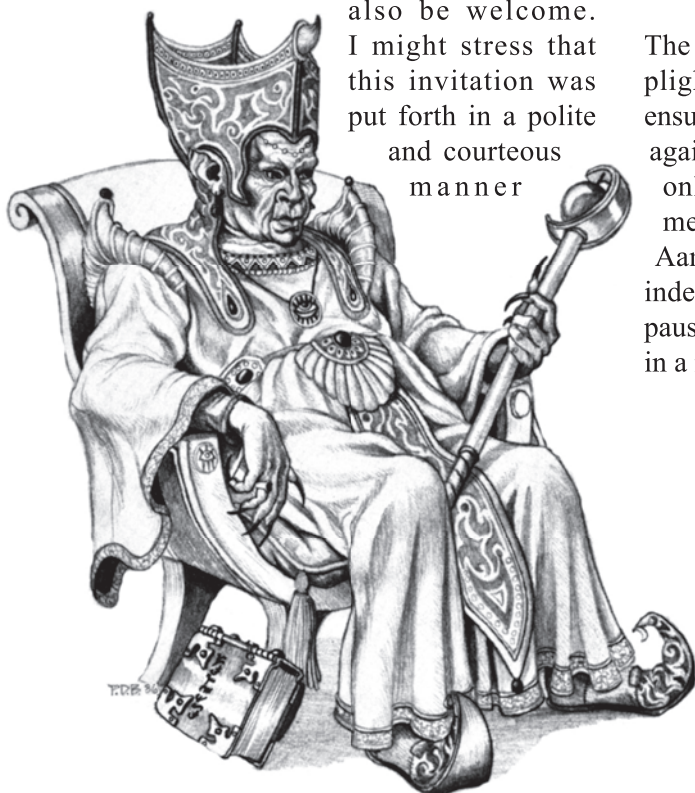
Quite inadvertently, I chose Aaman as the starting point for my exploration of the continent. While convenient in an alphabetical sense, this decision proved to be less than propitious. This is not to say that my preparations were, in any foreseeable fashion, unsound. On the contrary: I had in my possession a magical charm which bestowed upon its wearer the ability to comprehend and converse in any language, a scroll of seventeen spells, and

a copy of Quistan's "Interdimensional Omnibus"; the latter, a voluminous manuscript detailing the archaic sorcerer's travels throughout the parallel worlds, including his trip to the fabled city of Badijan, in Phaedra. Within were notations on the native culture, customs, and mode of dress, all of which I had studied thoroughly and was prepared to emulate.

Casting a spell of Dimensional Access, I arrived as planned on the outskirts of the city. I adjusted my raiment and, Quistan's Omnibus in hand, proceeded directly into Badijan. It quickly became apparent to me that something was greatly amiss. Gone were the grand concourses, the colorful costumes, and the pomp and spectacle described in Quistan's text. Instead, I looked with disappointment upon a city and people devoid of ornamentation or individuality.

Nevertheless, I decided to try and make the best of the situation. Approaching a comely young woman, I bowed and questioned her with regard to the likelihood of obtaining a room for the evening, implying that a bottle of the local wine and the pleasure of her company would

also be welcome. I might stress that this invitation was put forth in a polite and courteous manner



conforming in all respects to the accepted Phaedran style.

To have committed a greater number of indiscretions within the space of a single sentence, I now believe, might indeed have been a practical impossibility. The woman drew back as if I were a victim of the plague and emitted a piercing shriek. This drew the attention of three figures arrayed in shining white armor: Aamanian warrior-priests of the Orthodoxist cult, as I would later learn. The ominous looking trio eyed with suspicion my woefully outmoded attire, favoring me with the sort of look generally reserved for condemned felons. I commenced to explain my ignorance of the current fads and customs, but to no avail; the Knights drew silver-plated maces and advanced in a threatening manner.

Forcible conversion to the ways of Orthodoxy (or some equally grim fate) seemed imminent. Fortunately, the timely application of a spell of Bedazzlement rendered the three assailants temporarily insensible. In the interim, I effected a swift retreat into the relative safety of an alleyway.

The local citizenry were unsympathetic to my plight, and gave pursuit. A harrowing chase ensued, during which I eluded capture time and again by the narrowest of margins. I escaped only through the auspices of an Arimite ore merchant, who agreed to smuggle me out of Aaman in return for a promise of three years' indentured servitude. We departed for Arim, I pausing briefly to dispose of Quistan's Omnibus in a nearby sewage receptacle.

There have been some odd goings on in the land of Aaman of late. Rumors have reached my ears of secret shipments of ore and other building supplies to an area near our border. Other rumors tell of a grand invasion army being mustered by the Hierophant. This later rumor is simply the ramblings of overly paranoid Paradoxists I'm sure.

- Ardab

CITY GUIDE TO AAMAH

"I would sooner contract an incurable case of pubic lice than spend even a minute in the sanctimonious confines of Aamah!"

- Amor, Bodorian Maestro

A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO AAMAH

The Populace

As of the 1st of Ardan, precisely 69,364 inhabitants dwell within Aamah, for detailed records of the population are kept, and updated constantly with each new birth and death. Aamah is an unwelcoming city, for although it trades with the Farad, Arimites, and Djaffir, it prefers to conduct such dealings outside its own borders, the better to avoid contaminating its populace by contact with infidels (i.e. anyone who is not a worshipper of Aa). Needless to say, foreign visitors are heavily policed and monitored, and segregated from the populace for the most part.

History

Following over four centuries of savage conflict between the Orthodoxists and Paradoxists during the Cult Wars, a truce was finally called after the bloody sea battle that would see the Phaedran Gulf renamed the Sea of Sorrow. In 512 N.A. the rival factions that had ruined the Phaedran Empire, agreed to divide the nation in two, forming Aaman and Zandu. Work was begun on the Great Barrier Wall, as black stone was mined and hauled from the Onyx Mountains, with the aid of the Arimites. In 519 N.A. the Great Barrier Wall was completed, neatly bisecting Phaedra, and running through the center of the one-time capitol, Badijan. The Aamanian half of Badijan became the focus of strenuous rebuilding atop the existing sewers, and the Holy City of Aamah was the result.

VISIONS OF AAMAH

A View from Afar

A patchwork of rolling farmland surrounds the stern white walls of a large city. Stark against the surrounding fields, the great walls encompass stout, uniformly block-like structures, each rigidly

organized and positioned. White clad pilgrims scatter across the city's black causeway, as wagons bearing produce trundle to and fro.

At the Gates

Worn slabs of ebony stone form the aged Phaedran causeway that leads to the imposing city walls, entering through a forbidding gatehouse of perfectly square construction. Two 20-foot rectangular gates of studded black iron, each bearing half of a vast embossed eye, stand closed within the gatehouse. Several units of Aamanian soldiers stand before the gates, vigorously checking all that enter or leave, only opening the gates to those that pass their scrutiny.

The City Streets

Arrow-straight roads of gray slate criss-cross the city between monotonous whitewashed buildings roofed with dull slate. A 10-foot pillar of white stone is set at every corner, topped with a carved Eye of Aa. Shaven-headed Aamanians solemnly and slowly walk the streets, clad in shapeless white garments, women walking behind their men. All is surprisingly quiet, and interactions are brief and formal.

AAMAH AT NIGHT

The ghostly white streets of Aamah are eerily silent at night, deserted save for the patrols of cult guards.

Curfew is enforced throughout all of Aaman's settlements, and only those on sanctioned cult business (or assigned to patrol the city) are permitted to wander the streets between sundown and sunrise. This further controls the populace, and drastically reduces levels of crime.

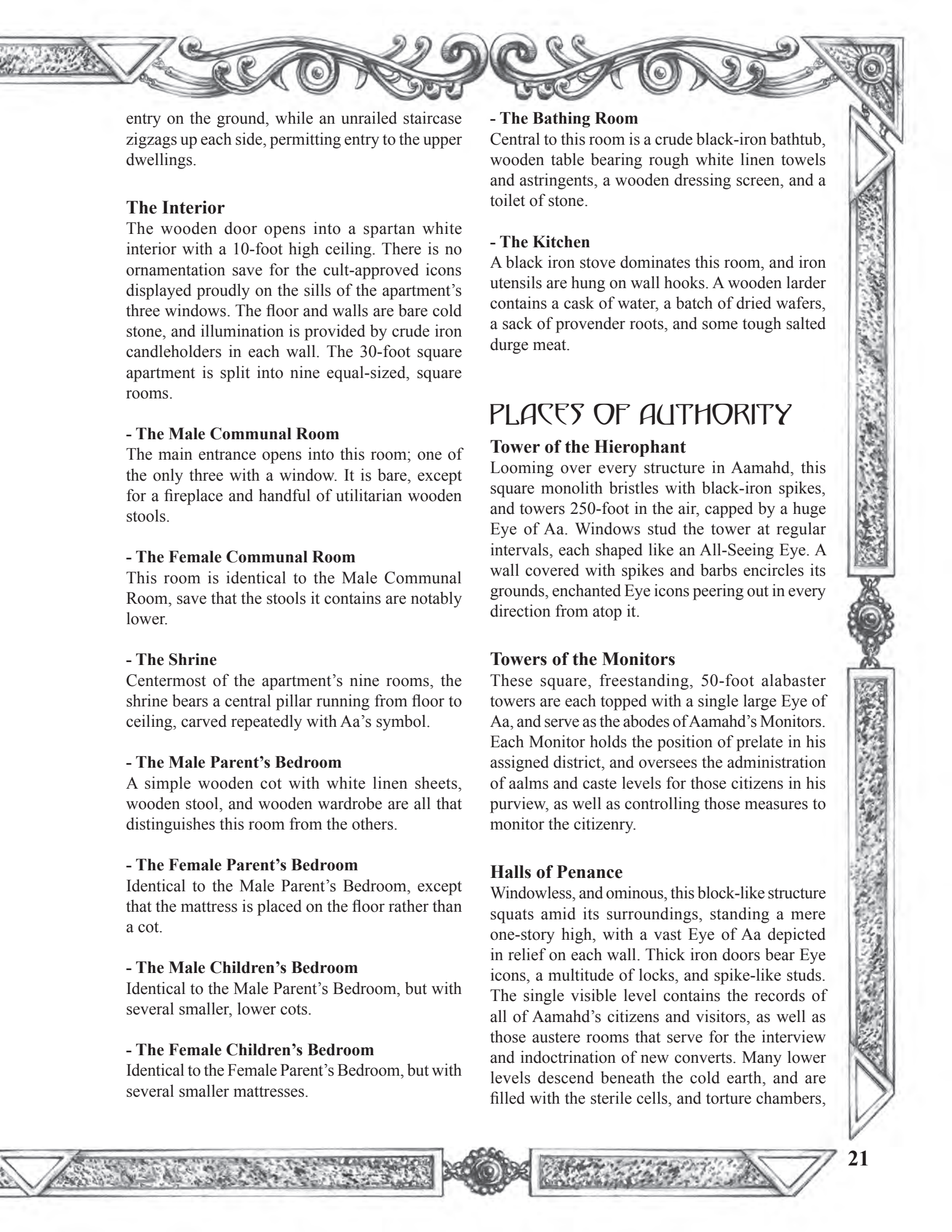
THE TYPICAL DWELLING

An Exterior View

An uninspiring rectangular block, indistinguishable from its neighbors, stands near the road, 100-foot square, and 40-foot tall. Square windows gaze out of the white walls at routine intervals, and the slightly sloping roof is clad with gray Arimite slate. Three identical plain wooden doors permit

THE CITY OF AAMAND





entry on the ground, while an unrailed staircase zigzags up each side, permitting entry to the upper dwellings.

The Interior

The wooden door opens into a spartan white interior with a 10-foot high ceiling. There is no ornamentation save for the cult-approved icons displayed proudly on the sills of the apartment's three windows. The floor and walls are bare cold stone, and illumination is provided by crude iron candleholders in each wall. The 30-foot square apartment is split into nine equal-sized, square rooms.

- The Male Communal Room

The main entrance opens into this room; one of the only three with a window. It is bare, except for a fireplace and handful of utilitarian wooden stools.

- The Female Communal Room

This room is identical to the Male Communal Room, save that the stools it contains are notably lower.

- The Shrine

Centermost of the apartment's nine rooms, the shrine bears a central pillar running from floor to ceiling, carved repeatedly with Aa's symbol.

- The Male Parent's Bedroom

A simple wooden cot with white linen sheets, wooden stool, and wooden wardrobe are all that distinguishes this room from the others.

- The Female Parent's Bedroom

Identical to the Male Parent's Bedroom, except that the mattress is placed on the floor rather than a cot.

- The Male Children's Bedroom

Identical to the Male Parent's Bedroom, but with several smaller, lower cots.

- The Female Children's Bedroom

Identical to the Female Parent's Bedroom, but with several smaller mattresses.

- The Bathing Room

Central to this room is a crude black-iron bathtub, wooden table bearing rough white linen towels and astringents, a wooden dressing screen, and a toilet of stone.

- The Kitchen

A black iron stove dominates this room, and iron utensils are hung on wall hooks. A wooden larder contains a cask of water, a batch of dried wafers, a sack of provender roots, and some tough salted durge meat.

PLACES OF AUTHORITY

Tower of the Hierophant

Looming over every structure in Aamahd, this square monolith bristles with black-iron spikes, and towers 250-foot in the air, capped by a huge Eye of Aa. Windows stud the tower at regular intervals, each shaped like an All-Seeing Eye. A wall covered with spikes and barbs encircles its grounds, enchanted Eye icons peering out in every direction from atop it.

Towers of the Monitors

These square, freestanding, 50-foot alabaster towers are each topped with a single large Eye of Aa, and serve as the abodes of Aamahd's Monitors. Each Monitor holds the position of prelate in his assigned district, and oversees the administration of aalms and caste levels for those citizens in his purview, as well as controlling those measures to monitor the citizenry.

Halls of Penance

Windowless, and ominous, this block-like structure squats amid its surroundings, standing a mere one-story high, with a vast Eye of Aa depicted in relief on each wall. Thick iron doors bear Eye icons, a multitude of locks, and spike-like studs. The single visible level contains the records of all of Aamahd's citizens and visitors, as well as those austere rooms that serve for the interview and indoctrination of new converts. Many lower levels descend beneath the cold earth, and are filled with the sterile cells, and torture chambers,

used to hold and “enlighten” the more intractable heathens and sinners.

Keep of the Unredeemed

Surrounded by a sturdy white wall topped with iron-spikes and inward-looking watchtowers, the Keep of the Unredeemed serves as Aamahd’s slave and concentration camp. Two barracks serve to house the slave-masters and guards, while spiked iron grates in the grounds lead down into three levels of dismal and unlit cells.

MILITARY BASES

Mace of Aa Monastery

Brutal and utilitarian, this large citadel of ivory stone is the sequestered monastery and seminary of Aamahd’s Warrior-Priest contingent.

Fist of Aa Monastery

This huge crenellated fortress of bleached stone is the barracks and training ground of the Aamahd’s sizeable soldiery, and is simple and severe in construction.

Vengeance of Aa Monastery

This small sturdy hall adjacent to the Mace of Aa Monastery serves as the base of operations and abode of Aamahd’s Witch Hunter contingent, each of whom receives martial training in the Mace of Aa Monastery, and Invocation training in the Gaze of Aa Monastery

The Gatehouse Fortress

Surrounding the city’s fearsome iron gates is a stout alabaster fortress that flanks and tops it. An interior portcullis is only lowered during troubled times. Two units of 20 soldiers, each lead by a warrior-priest, police all individuals wishing to enter or leave the city, while another two units are stationed in the fortress at all times.

The Great Barrier Wall

60-foot high and 30-foot thick, this awe-inspiring black structure looms above the city and stretches beyond, vanishing into the distance, running from

the border of Arim to the Sea of Sorrow.

Towers of Aa’s Watchfulness

Located every 1,000-foot along the Great Barrier Wall (closer in the city of Aamahd itself), these stark and angular towers of alabaster stand 70-foot high, each manned by a unit of 10 soldiers and 5 crossbowmen who have a barracks in the tower. They keep constant watch on the border with Zandu in shifts. A magical All-Seeing Eye orb in each tower is used to communicate directly with the Monitors in the event of an enemy assault.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Halls of Faith

This extensive pillared hall is filled with rows of pews, and carved all over with Orthodoxist symbology inlaid with traceries of black enamel. Cult members gather here with their peers to meditate, discuss doctrine, and learn of the latest decrees of the Hierophant. Archimages are on hand to assist the faithful in committing to memory cherished phrases from the Omnival.


Gaze of Aa Monastery

This small walled complex of temple-like white halls and residential blocks serves as Aamahd’s Archimage monastery, wherein aspiring clergy undergo their long and harsh tutelage in both ritual, doctrine, and invocation. Once a potential acolyte has entered these walls, they will not be permitted to leave them again until they either fail or leave as fully trained Archimages. Those Archimages who are unable to find a position in a temple or other cult-run establishment, are expected to travel and spread the creed of Aa.

MUSEUMS & LIBRARIES

Hall of Aa’s Memory

Amongst the most ostentatious of Aamahd’s constructions, this museum is roofed with a pyramid of white slate, its levels supported by white marble pillars, and interior walls graced with



friezes depicting notable events in cult history. Orderly rows of glass cabinets display the bones and garments of great martyrs, weapons used by great cult heroes to slay heretics, early icons, and so forth. The top floor of the museum serves as a small monastery for Aamahd's Reliquarians. Admission costs 5 silver pieces.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Temple of Ascension unto Aa

This ivory-colored temple is built precisely 200-foot square, and 100-foot in height. Square stone pillars support the pyramidal roof of white slate, and tall rectangular windows provide light from without. Regular iron braziers light the interior of the great empty hall that forms the center of worship, at the end of which is a white marble altar overlooked by a large silver Eye of Aa. The impassive Archimage, Aagar, and his retinue of underpriests, acolytes, and devotees, maintain quarters behind the main hall.

Temple of Omnificent Aa

100-foot square, and 100-foot in height, the Temple of Omnificent Aa is a study in perfection, with every white block made to the exact same dimensions, every perfectly square window, the exact same size, and mirrored on each wall. With four identical doors leading in from each exterior wall, the main hall is supported by four pillars, and a square altar stands in the middle, an eye of Aa on each face. The resident Archimage, Aaqa, is known for his soothing, almost seductive speeches, and great success in winning converts.

Temple of Aa's Omnipotence

Unique among Aamahd's temples, the Temple of Aa's Omnipotence has no walls, the roof being supported instead by two perfect rows of square columns. The local Aamanians attend here without fail, irrespective of weather, prepared to endure all for their faith in Aa. The painfully thin Archimage, Aahaus, cries the need for control, abstinence, and sacrifice in the name of Aa.

Temple of All-Knowing Aa

Raised on a square dias of ten steps, this temple is Aamahd's smallest, being a mere 50-foot square, and 50-foot high. Ten doorways lead into the white marble interior supported by ten square pillars. A simple podium stands at the end of the hall, overlooked by a silver Eye of Aa. Archimage Aapren leads the local faithful in repetitive mantras of cult slogans.

Temple of Aa's Omnipresence

This temple is simple, austere, and severe, with no decoration except for the single large "Eye of Aa" carved on its altar. The charismatic Archimage, Aazron, makes his stirring sermons here, emphasizing that Aaman must root out its own sins before it can concentrate on the infidel.

Temple of All-Seeing Aa

Every available foot of space in this temple has been decorated with a recurring "Eye of Aa" motif, making it appear slightly unnerving. The eyes gaze out, unblinking, from every wall, pillar, floor, and ceiling. Even the altar itself is carved to resemble a single great eye. Archimage Aaval raves with paranoia, his rants about constant vigilance drawing many of Aamahd's more fanatical worshippers.

Temple of Aa's Omniscience

Unadorned but for a single vast "Eye of Aa" on the interior of each of the temple's four walls, the Temple of Aa's Omniscience is notable in the fact that it lacks an altar. The studious Archimage, Aadan, stalks amid the worshippers at his temple, confronting them personally, and whispering Aa's creed in their ears.

Temple of All-Mighty Aa

Stern and bold in construction, the Temple of All-Mighty Aa stands alone, modeled after the fortress-like Mace of Aa Monastery. Its interior decorated with friezes depicting Aamanian warriors slaying infidels, the militant Archimage, Aacas, exhorts the faithful to crusade against the infidel.

Majestic Cathedral of Aa

Resembling a titanic temple, the Majestic Cathedral of Aa serves as the temple of Aamahd's high caste members on those holy days of especial significance, and services here are given by the Hierophant himself. The huge main hall contains a raised dais surrounded by a solid silver altar over which a great silver Eye of Aa levitates, inlaid with ebony and ivory, and bearing a crystal iris that glows with fierce white fire. The many pillars of white marble are inlaid with black enamel iconography, and an enchantment serves to project the speaker's voice throughout the hall.

MARKETS & BAZAARS

Square of the Devoted

This square expanse of white paving serves as the public square, and it is here that outside traders may set up their stalls under the strict scrutiny of cult auditors who ensure that all produce meets cult regulations, and all costs are regulated. Several stone platforms and a deep well stand at the center of the square.

TRADERS, ARTISANS & MERCHANTS

Bounty of Aa, Pilgrimage Supply

Located adjacent to the Pilgrim's Rest hostel, this immense stone warehouse - owned and administrated by the cult - offers all the cult-approved items that an individual undertaking a pilgrimage or crusade could possibly desire: travelers' raiment, maps, wagons, burden beasts, rations, Orthodoxist icons, weapons, armor, slave bearers, etc. Costs are x2 standard. A trio of Archimages supervises the operation.

Mercantiler's District

This area is filled with row upon row of small, identical white-washed stores, each differentiated solely by the wrought iron sign that is displayed above the door. Many goods and services are available here, such as limners (selling white lacquers), alchemists (astringents, bleaches,

and depilatory elixirs), clothiers (cult vestments only), tanners, millers, blacksmiths, masons, carpenters, potters, and so forth. None dare sell their wares unless the designs and materials have been approved by the cult, and all prices must be set by the cult.

INNS, TAVERNS, & RESTAURANTS

Pilgrim's Rest

This cult hostel has been converted from two adjacent resident blocks, with the space that would have run between them, now featuring a basic stone stable. Each room bears a crude wooden cot, small table, and a large Eye of Aa carved in the ceiling. Costs for both food and board are somewhat above average.

Infidel's Rest

Walled off from the rest of the city, and heavily patrolled and monitored, this uninspiring complex contains a converted residential block, stable, and courtyard. Any non-Orthodoxists that wish to board in Aamahd are only permitted to stay at this cult-run establishment. All of Aamahd's laws apply here, and its drafty rooms, poor stabling, and monotonous comestibles are available at inflated prices (x3 standard).

TRANSPORTATION

Docks

Orderly, clean, and well-maintained, stout wooden piers, and frameworks of block and tackle provide docking for up to a dozen vessels in Aamahd's dock. Aamanian military ships, and traders, primarily native, arrive and depart from this point, carrying slaves, articles of iron, and other cargo, which they trade internally, and with the merchants of Faradun, Arim, and Imria. The dock is reached via a straight man-made waterway that leads inland from the Sea of Sorrow, and enters the city through a great iron-gated archway in the south wall.



Aaman Canal

This 60-foot wide man-made waterway connects Aamahd's dock to the Sea of Sorrow, allowing vessels to sail inland to dock at the capital.

MISCELLANEOUS

Cemetery of Aa's Effulgence

Resembling nothing so much as a mammoth block of white marble, 100-foot high, this mausoleum bears no windows or adornment of any kind, save for the open arches that regularly pierce its base, each topped with an Eye of Aa. The interior is filled with level upon level of shelves, each bearing the iron or silver placards that bear the names, castes, and aalm-totals of each of Aamahd's dead. Higher caste and rank guarantees that the individual's placard is located on a higher level. Recognized martyrs, including those who died during the Cult Wars, are commemorated on the top level.

Benevolence of Aa Monastery

Surrounded by a stout wall, this complex contains a large two-story vaulted hall topped with a steep roof of gray slate, and two smaller residential blocks, all with tall rectangular windows. The main vaulted hall contains four large hospital wards of curtained cots, and the offices of the Hospitaller Nuns who run this cult-provided medical establishment. The two smaller residential blocks serve as the accommodation for those of the Hospitaller Order, and the grounds are strictly patrolled.

Hall of Purity

This large and dull square structure is painted in blinding white, and permeates a strong astringent odor. Gender-segregated levels feature innumerable black-iron bathing tubs of depilatory elixir and astringent, as well as rack upon rack of harsh towels, and rows of changing screens. All of Aamahd's residents are expected to avail themselves of this free cult-provided service, at the first sign of any hair growth anywhere on their bodies.

Hall of Aa's Mercy

This dour orphanage is a converted residential block, with each of the two lower floors housing a single large dormitory of cots (one dormitory for each gender), and the top floor consisting of the residences and offices of those few Hospitaller Nuns who run the orphanage. Constant sermons and lectures, reinforced by harsh treatment, serve to control and indoctrinate the unfortunate children. Despite this harsh treatment, the orphans are clothed, sheltered, and well fed, many eventually moving into positions within the Orthodoxist cult itself.

Toll Gates

Supported on either side by solid black pillars of gargantuan proportion, three unadorned and monumental gates of copper, 30-foot in height, directly link Aamahd and Zanth through the Great Barrier Wall's only opening. Each gate is operated and overlooked by a gatehouse located within the great flanking pillars. Standing directly above the central of the three gates is a small stone platform: the site of the annual Clash of Champions.

Clash of Champions Platform

The annual Clash of Champions takes place on this large stone platform that stands directly over the central tollgate of The Great Barrier Wall. The stone platform is 20-foot in diameter, perfectly level, and has no safety barrier. Incautious combatants can be forced off the edge to plummet to injury or death. It is considered a particular coup to cause a vanquished foe to fall amongst their own supporters.

Stadia of Aa's Chosen

This white stadia is 100-foot square, with numerous rows of stone steps, providing seating for spectators at the annual Clash of Champions. Order of seating is arranged according to rank and aalm-levels; with higher ranks getting seating closer to the Platform. Only those of Aspirant caste or higher are afforded space in the stadia. Hawkers selling cult-approved paraphernalia stand at regular intervals amid the stands. It goes unused throughout the rest of the year.

NOTABLE CITIZENS

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

Aamalak - Wrathful Archimage

Heavy-framed and portly, Aamalak is an imposing figure, and his deep sonorous voice is inspiring. His fiery sermons at the Temple of All-Mighty Aa are extremely popular, and his hatred of infidels knows no bounds.

Aaskir - Rapturous Flagellant

Aaskir is visiting Aamahd as part of a pilgrimage, and finds the experience driving him into a frenzy of divine rapture. His heavy white robe is tattered and frayed, his bare feet are dirty, his eyes are wild, and he long ago branded an Eye of Aa into his forehead.

Aakrid - Servant at the Infidel's Rest

The sniveling little Aamanian known as Aakrid, is a member of the serving staff at the Infidel's Rest. He delights in threatening foreign infidels far more powerful than he is, and has been known to frame or blackmail those that displease him.

Aatril - Honorable Warrior-Priest

Powerful, charismatic, and handsome, Aatril is a dedicated and honorable warrior, who commands loyalty in all those he commands. However, his sense of honor is so deep that should he be called

to choose between duty and honor, it is likely that honor might well prevail.

Aandan - Paranoid Monitor

Aandan is gripped by paranoia, despite his vaunted position, for he harbors deep feelings of lust that wrack him with guilt, and he fears one of his fellow Monitors might well discover his inner turmoil. Even more fearful to him is the fact that he might lose control some day. Because of his overriding fear, he performs his monitoring duties with zeal almost unmatched by his peers.

Aamon - Regretful Inquisitor

Aamon has served as a professional, skilled, and dedicated Inquisitor for the past two decades, but derives no pleasure from his craft. As of late, he has begun to experience pangs of regret over his chosen profession, and nightmares are starting to plague his sleep. Unbeknownst to him, his more callous colleagues are beginning to suspect that he lacks the required dedication to Aa.

Aash - Sly Witch Hunter

Friendly, open, relaxed: All are terms that any but the most astute might use to describe Aash, but such traits are merely a charade and lure, for few Aamanians are so calculating, ruthless, cruel, and utterly relentless. Pity the witch or sinner that falls into Aash's clutches.

Aamsha - Hospitaller Nun Acolyte

Stern, aloof, and painfully thin, the young Aamsha is currently undergoing her medical training in the Hall of Aa's Mercy. Despite her willingness to serve Aa, she is indifferent to the suffering of others, and she finds the more concerned approach displayed by other Hospitaller Nuns to be most displeasing.

Aamelia - Heterodoxist Conspirator

Aamelia is the young daughter of a low caste slater, but was recently recruited as part of a Heterodoxist cell, and her association with the Heterodoxists has opened her eyes to the injustices of her people. She is now patiently, and painstakingly, looking for other potential recruits.



Aamog - Brutish Slave Master

Peeling skin bleached white with astringents, the muscular and thuggish Aamog squints and leers at his charges, and demands that they recognize his superior intellect and attractiveness. He particularly hates Gnomekin, and finds their friendly manner and faith in Terra to be more than enough reason for him to flog them ceaselessly.

Aasara - Bitter Trader

A regular trader at the Square of the Devoted, Aasara spent much of her early life as an orphan, after her parents were killed on a pilgrimage, by unknown “infidels”. Instilled with a hatred of outsiders, Aasara loves nothing better than to

take foreigners for all they’re worth, before subtly coaxing them into saying or doing something blasphemous, then informing the nearest Warrior-Priest.



ARIM

Arim is a land of rough and irregular hills, interspersed with grassy steppes and thickets of stunted oak and briar. To the north lie the dark peaks of the Onyx Mountains; to the northwest is Lake Venda, source of the great Axis River, fed by countless mountain streams and brooks. West lies Werewood; east, the towering cliffs of Bahahd fall away into the Darklands of Urag.

The people who live in this grey and windy realm, known as the Arimites, are a dour and moody lot. They are swarthy of complexion, with long black hair and dark, deep-set eyes. The men tend to be gaunt and wiry, with glaring countenances and hatchet-like features; the women, heavy-set and

lacking in charm. The customary mode of dress in this region defies all concept of fashion, and consists primarily of sackcloth garments, animal hide boots, bulky fur vests, and wristbands, knives, and ear-rings made of dull, black iron.

The Arimites are a humorless people, most of whom live hard lives as miners of the country’s considerable mineral wealth. They have no love of song or dance, but favor chakos, a fiery liquor brewed in black iron kegs. Abuse of this potent intoxicant is widespread in Arim, especially among the overworked miners, who seek escape from the tedium of their existence. Even discounting the influence of chakos, violence and other forms of pathologically deviant behavior seem to be ingrained traits among these folk. Accordingly,

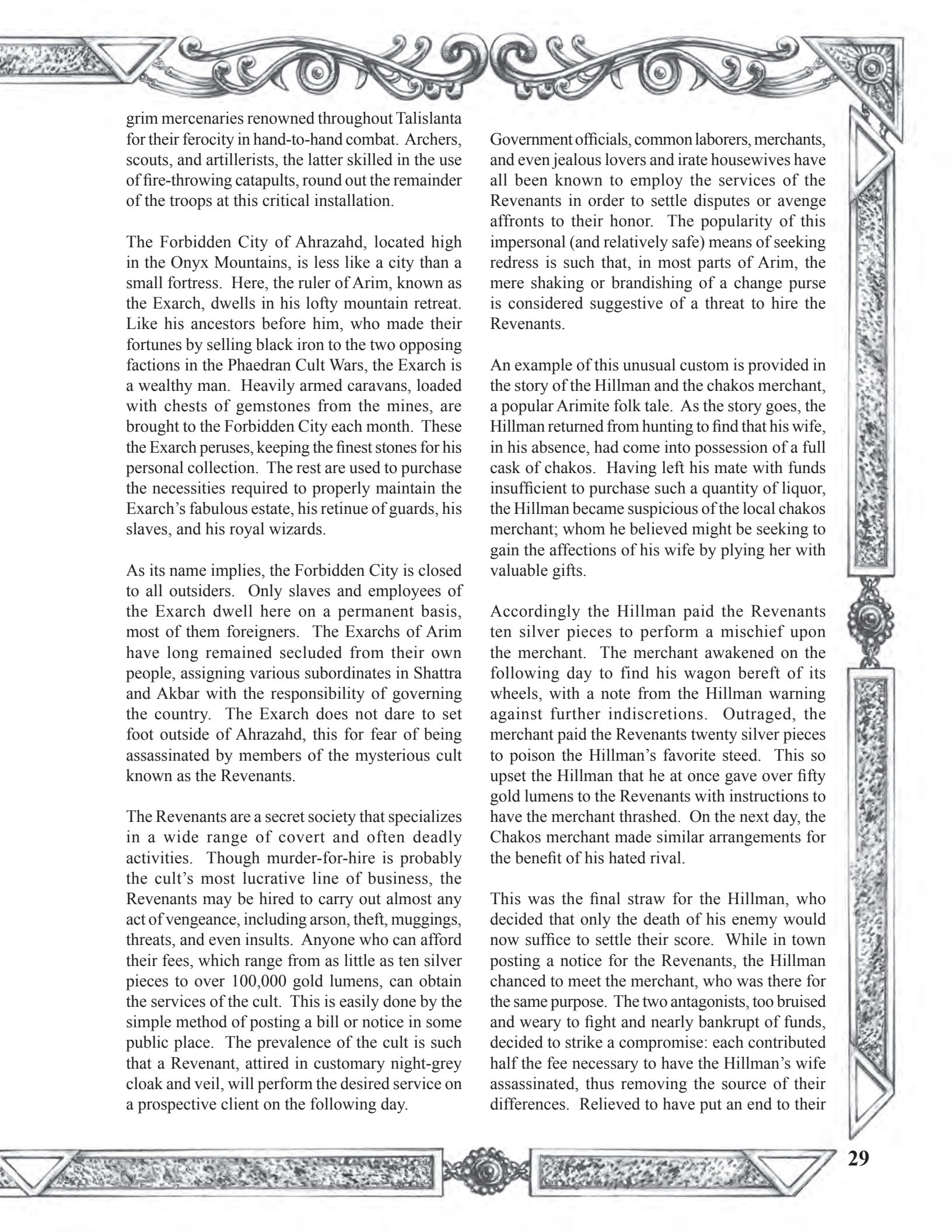


the Arimites have a reputation in other lands as cut-throats; an assessment which many claim is not entirely without merit.

There are three settlements of note in Arim: the mining and trade center of Shattru, the citadel of Akbar, and the Forbidden City of Ahrazahd. By far the largest of the three is Shattru, a sprawling port city situated on the banks of the Axis River. It is a filthy place, crowded with ramshackle wooden structures and perpetually covered in a haze of sooty smoke. Most of the country's mining camps transport their ore to Shattru by wagon, where it is smelted into ingots and shipped downriver in heavy barges. Shattru exports great quantities of black iron, silver, and lead, its primary customers being Amman, Zandu and the Seven Kingdoms. Due to the nature of its business, the city is seldom visited by any save miners and ore traders. The grey-skinned Mongers of Faradun occasionally

come here, however, and do a brisk trade in slave girls, courtesans, and concubines; women of grace and beauty are a somewhat rare commodity in Arim, particularly in the isolated mining camps of the northern mountain region.

The citadel of Akbar is primarily a military outpost, though some trade is done here with the nomadic Djaffir merchant tribes (and more recently the Sindarans have established a lucrative trade route dealing primarily in alchemicals and their constituents – Quilym). Situated at the southwestern end of a deep gorge which cuts through the Onyx Mountains, Akbar is a foreboding structure built entirely of massive stone blocks. As many as ten thousand Arimite warriors are stationed here at all times, their main purpose being to guard the pass from intrusion by the Ur clans of neighboring Urag. Fully half of this force is comprised of Arimite knife fighters,



grim mercenaries renowned throughout Talislanta for their ferocity in hand-to-hand combat. Archers, scouts, and artilleryists, the latter skilled in the use of fire-throwing catapults, round out the remainder of the troops at this critical installation.

The Forbidden City of Ahrazahd, located high in the Onyx Mountains, is less like a city than a small fortress. Here, the ruler of Arim, known as the Exarch, dwells in his lofty mountain retreat. Like his ancestors before him, who made their fortunes by selling black iron to the two opposing factions in the Phaedran Cult Wars, the Exarch is a wealthy man. Heavily armed caravans, loaded with chests of gemstones from the mines, are brought to the Forbidden City each month. These the Exarch peruses, keeping the finest stones for his personal collection. The rest are used to purchase the necessities required to properly maintain the Exarch's fabulous estate, his retinue of guards, his slaves, and his royal wizards.

As its name implies, the Forbidden City is closed to all outsiders. Only slaves and employees of the Exarch dwell here on a permanent basis, most of them foreigners. The Exarchs of Arim have long remained secluded from their own people, assigning various subordinates in Shattrra and Akbar with the responsibility of governing the country. The Exarch does not dare to set foot outside of Ahrazahd, this for fear of being assassinated by members of the mysterious cult known as the Revenants.

The Revenants are a secret society that specializes in a wide range of covert and often deadly activities. Though murder-for-hire is probably the cult's most lucrative line of business, the Revenants may be hired to carry out almost any act of vengeance, including arson, theft, muggings, threats, and even insults. Anyone who can afford their fees, which range from as little as ten silver pieces to over 100,000 gold lumens, can obtain the services of the cult. This is easily done by the simple method of posting a bill or notice in some public place. The prevalence of the cult is such that a Revenant, attired in customary night-grey cloak and veil, will perform the desired service on a prospective client on the following day.

Government officials, common laborers, merchants, and even jealous lovers and irate housewives have all been known to employ the services of the Revenants in order to settle disputes or avenge affronts to their honor. The popularity of this impersonal (and relatively safe) means of seeking redress is such that, in most parts of Arim, the mere shaking or brandishing of a change purse is considered suggestive of a threat to hire the Revenants.

An example of this unusual custom is provided in the story of the Hillman and the chakos merchant, a popular Arimite folk tale. As the story goes, the Hillman returned from hunting to find that his wife, in his absence, had come into possession of a full cask of chakos. Having left his mate with funds insufficient to purchase such a quantity of liquor, the Hillman became suspicious of the local chakos merchant; whom he believed might be seeking to gain the affections of his wife by plying her with valuable gifts.

Accordingly the Hillman paid the Revenants ten silver pieces to perform a mischief upon the merchant. The merchant awakened on the following day to find his wagon bereft of its wheels, with a note from the Hillman warning against further indiscretions. Outraged, the merchant paid the Revenants twenty silver pieces to poison the Hillman's favorite steed. This so upset the Hillman that he at once gave over fifty gold lumens to the Revenants with instructions to have the merchant thrashed. On the next day, the Chakos merchant made similar arrangements for the benefit of his hated rival.

This was the final straw for the Hillman, who decided that only the death of his enemy would now suffice to settle their score. While in town posting a notice for the Revenants, the Hillman chanced to meet the merchant, who was there for the same purpose. The two antagonists, too bruised and weary to fight and nearly bankrupt of funds, decided to strike a compromise: each contributed half the fee necessary to have the Hillman's wife assassinated, thus removing the source of their differences. Relieved to have put an end to their

feud, the two men parted friends.

Unfortunately, neither ever saw the other alive again. Unbeknownst to either man, the Hillman's wife was a member of the Revenant cult, whose followers are strictly forbidden to do harm to one of their own kind.

The mountains and hills of Arim are home to many species of wild animals, including herds of muskront, wooley ogriphant, and the swift creatures known as greymanes. As predatory exomorphs and yaksha also dwell here, the novice hunter is perhaps best advised to avoid vacationing in this region. Adding to the area's notable lack of appeal are the folk known as the Druhks, a nomadic hill people of violent habits. Similar in physical stature to the Arimites, the Druhks dress in the skins of wild beasts, stain their hair and bodies with the purple juice of wild mountain berries, and wield stone war clubs and jagged-edged, bone daggers. They are decidedly unfriendly finding great enjoyment in skinning alive individuals who trespass into their tribal lands. Druhk warriors (male and female) ride wild greymanes also dyed purple with berry juice; a most unusual sight, or so it is said.

The Onyx Mountains of Arim are rich in silver and black iron, and are known to hold even more precious substances. Fine emeralds and garnets are found here, as are sards, carnelians, and beryls of passable quality. The caves which dot the sheer faces of the cliffs of Bahahd are known to contain moonstones of immense size and impeccable color. Cliff-dwelling Stryx, wandering bands of Darklings from nearby Urag, and the fearsome Nocturnal Strangler haunt these environs, however, serving to dull the enthusiasm of most would-be prospectors.



BATRE

Batre is a small, tropical isle located to the south of the Dark Coast. Its jungles abound with fruiting trees, crystal streams, and scenic waterfalls. Long a popular stopover point for vessels seeking fresh water and supplies, the island is well known by sailors and navigators, who consider it one of the few safe havens in the Azure Ocean. Batre is even more notable, however, for the race of ivory-skinned humanoids who dwell here, known as the Batreans.

The Batreans are a primitive people who dress in rude garments of coarse cloth and dye their hair with indelible blue pigments. Male and female Batreans bear so little resemblance to each other that they seem to be separate species: the males are huge, slope-shouldered, hairy, and remarkably ugly. Slow and ponderous, they possess the manners of swine, and fight among each other with regularity. The Batrean females, on the other hand, are engaging creatures, slender and lovely beyond compare. Their movements are graceful, and their manner of speech is charming and at times most eloquent. Batrean males seem unmoved by the beauty of their females, whom they largely ignore except during the males' brief, week-long mating season. In fact, it is the peculiar custom of Batrean males to sell their womenfolk for gold, which they hoard in secret, underground caches.

For many years, entrepreneurial sea-farers have risked the perils of ocean travel in order to purchase Batrean females, who bring exorbitant prices as concubines in lands such as Zandu, Arim, Faradun, and Quan. Though Batrean males demand as much as 1,000 gold lumens for even the most modest females, their value in foreign lands may exceed five or even ten times this figure.

As for the Batrean females themselves, few evince any great sadness at being separated from their boorish, slovenly mates. On the contrary; some have even been known to help pay for their release with coins pilfered from the hidden treasure caches of their husbands. None appear to miss the mud and thatch hovels which the Batrean males call home, and most seem to adapt to their new surroundings



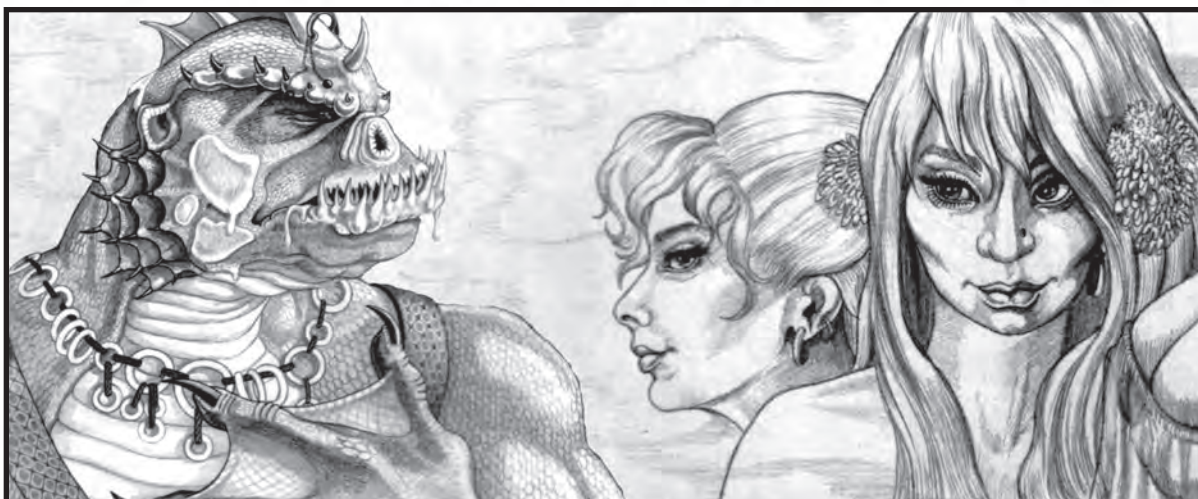
with very little difficulty. Once established in their new residences more than a few Batrean females have been known to exhibit an uncanny ability to influence their masters by various subtle and effective means, a talent attributed to magic by some observers.

The estimable Kabros, sorcerer and one-time ruler of ancient Phaedra considered such theories uninformed, and hence, erroneous. In his famed book, "Perception and Delusion," he states emphatically: "The ability of Batrean females to influence males of other species can be attributed to their scent, which possesses aphrodisiac properties similar in effect to Tantalus vine. Batrean males, who as a group suffer from chronic sinus difficulties, are evidently unaffected by the potent pheromones emitted by their mates."

Intrigued by Kabros' writings, I endeavored to find some means of putting his claims to the test. An opportunity unexpectedly presented itself in

Zandu, where, out of courtesy to a Farad monger, I volunteered to chaperone three Batrean concubines whom he intended to sell in Arim. The Farad went off to tend to other business, leaving me to watch over his wagon, in which were safely secreted his lovely charges. Plugging my nasal passages with two small wads of compacted silkcloth, I entered the wagon, employing a minor bit of legerdemain to foil the Farad's locks

The Batreans greeted me with obvious delight, and pressed their charms upon me in a most generous fashion. All went according to my most optimistic plans, until a sudden sneeze caused my hastily improvised nasal filters to be expelled. I came to my senses sometime later, awakened by the shrieks and curses of the Farad monger, who had returned to find the concubines missing, and with them, all of his gold. Happily for myself, the Batreans had been kind enough to hide me, dazed but unhurt, in a clump of nearby bushes. I deemed the results of my experiment to be sufficiently conclusive, and



departed the area post-haste.”

There are two extensive settlements on the island of Batre: the villages of Domal and Lal-Lat. Both are located far inland, and surrounded by hedgerows of Thornwood. Crude but effective, these defenses are required to thwart poachers and raiding parties of Imrian slavers, who prefer a more direct method of acquiring Batrean females. Batrean males, armed with giant clubs, patrol the perimeters in slow but fairly efficient fashion.

Passage through the jungle, even along the trails leading to the two villages, is fraught with danger. Wild beasts, and such frightful creatures as the Kaliya (a many-headed, black-scaled species of dragon), are found throughout the isle. Several varieties of lotus also grow here, along with other rare species of plants and animals. To some, the hazards of the Batrean jungles pale in comparison to the potential profits which may be reaped through acquisition of a few choice Batrean concubines.

An update from Quendifax Merdigan - Professor of Southern Cultures, Lyceum Arcanum:

The Batre visited by Tamerlin prior to 600 NA is sadly gone. A few years after Tamerlin's visit, the island was conquered, occupied and annexed by the Imrians. Long a source of slaves,

the Imrians decided outright control of this income source was required for their national security. The annexation was vocally opposed by Faradun but not one Monger or Monopolist in Tarun invested a single gold lumen into preserving the freedom of the Batreans. Being a remote and uncivilized island, the nations of Talislanta hardly took notice of the subjugation of Batreans.

Prior to the island's occupation, males and females traditionally lived apart. Now the two sexes are not only live apart, they are strictly segregated by their Imrian masters, who have killed off most of the males, saving only a few dozen for use as breeders.

Breeding males are kept in thornwood pens and allowed out only to take nourishment and relieve themselves. The females still live in huts, but are closely watched by Imrian guards. It is believed that Imrians, like the Batrean males, are immune to the intoxicating effects of the female Batrean phermones.

The Imrians breed Batrean females for sale as slaves and concubines, transporting them via their crude coracles to such distant lands as Faradun, the Kang Empire, Arim, Hadj, and Zandu. Aside from this, Batre has no relations with the outside world.

Males who disobey and order given by an Imrian

overlord are summarily executed. Disobedient females are routinely beaten.

A heavily armed contingent of about a hundred Imrians is currently stationed on Batre. They built a lookout tower and crude harbor facilities, but otherwise merely took over the existing Batrean fortifications and upgraded them. Encircling the only remaining Batrean settlement is a living wall of thornwood, augmented by rows of sharpened stakes and hidden snares.

When visiting Batre, Tamerlin remarked on two major settlements. Since that time, the Imrians razed Lal-Lat in 602, and moved the surviving inhabitants to Domal, which is further inland, and easier to defend.

Today, the island of Batre is firmly under the control of the Imrians although several expatriot Batreans have recently been lobbying the governments of the Seven Kingdoms, Faradun, Zandu, Danuvia and even Jhangara for assistance in liberating their homeland.

It is the sincerest hope of this scholar that these governments take heed and assist this oppressed people however they can. — Quen

CARANTHEUM

The kingdom of Carantheum is located in the Red Desert, a great expanse of scarlet sand surrounded on all sides by the Wilderlands of Zaran. It is a harsh land, swept by sandstorms and scorched by the burning rays of Talislanta's twin suns. Practically devoid of most forms of life, the Red Desert is nonetheless home to one of the foremost centers of trade on the continent: the Crimson Citadel of Dracarta.

The folk of Carantheum, known as the Dracartans, are tall and jade-skinned, with chiseled features. Formerly a tribe of nomadic wanderers, these hardy folk settled in the Red Desert some centuries ago. With the discovery of red iron (a metal superior in

all aspects to common black iron), the Dracartans became rich, and Carantheum soon became an important center of trade and commerce. Once able to afford only the meanest of garments, the Dracartans now dress in flowing robes, cloaks and turbans of fine white linen, and adorn their bodies with red iron necklaces, bracers and torcs.

Carantheum is famed for its thaumaturges, who are greatly esteemed for the wondrous products which they create. Not the least of these is the elusive substance known as quintessence, a crystalline powder derived by a secret alchemical process. By skillful utilization of the magical properties of quintessence, the Dracartan thaumaturges are able to transmute the very nature of substance. Thus, they are able to solidify water, liquify stone or metal, turn sand into glassine stone, or even place elemental forces in suspension. The symbols of the Dracartan thaumaturges power are the star of four triangles (representing the relationship of the four elements to the three states of matter) and the caduceus, or "thaumaturgic wand."

The city of Dracarta, also known as the Crimson Citadel, stands as a testament to the extraordinary abilities of the Dracartan thaumaturges. Its towering obelisks and three-fold outer walls are built of solidified desert sand plated with liquefied red iron. Merchant caravans from many lands come here, bearing goods of all varieties: amberglass from Cymril, woven goods and hardwoods from Vardune, scintilla and amber from Jhangara, precious stones and metals from Arim, beasts from Djaffa and the Wilderlands of Zaran, and many others. From Astar, the Dracartans obtain much-needed stores of water, solidified and cut into massive blocks, then transported across the desert in sail-powered land barges.

The Crimson Citadel, with its vast riches, is by need heavily fortified against attack. Great siege engines ward the outer walls, positioned to rain quantities of red menace, blue havoc, or yellow peril (liquefied flame, ice and sulphur, respectively) on would-be invaders. Smaller versions of these devices are mounted at the prow of dune ships. Like the Dracartans' land barges, these rolling fortresses are sail-powered; added impetus is



achieved through the use of wind funnels and storm crystals (solidified wind).

The dune ships are manned by warriors of the Dracartan army known as desert scouts. Mounted on swift ontra and equipped with red iron bracers, vests of red iron discs, swords and hurlants (hand-held versions of the Dracartan thaumaturge's siege engines), the desert scouts are a force to be reckoned with. A dune ship will usually carry up to six dozen desert scouts, half as many ontra stabled below decks, and at least one thaumaturge of some ability. A winch-operated drawbridge allows mounted scout units to enter or exit the ship without delay.

Carantheum is ruled by a king, who is chosen by a process known as the "Test of the Ancients." The ordeal is said to consist of three separate parts: a journey through the desert, the scaling of a magical mountain of glass, and the retrieval of a magic scepter from a vault deep inside the mountain. A committee of nine elder statesmen meets in secret council, selecting three suitable individuals from a list of qualified applicants. The first to successfully complete the test is ordained as king, and enthroned in the royal palace at Dracarta. The remaining two applicants, assuming they survive, are crowned as princes of the realm and granted positions of authority in Nadan and Anasa. The test is held once every twelve years, unless the premature death of a reigning king requires otherwise.

The folk of Carantheum revere Jamba, the

mysterious and unknowable god of their nomadic ancestors. They build pyramid-shaped shrines in honor of their patron, whose ways are said to be beyond the understanding of mere mortals. Neither do the priests and priestess of Jamba profess to entirely comprehend the ways of their arcane deity. Most walk about with puzzled looks on their faces a good deal of the time. According to legend, it was Jamba who guided the Dracartans into the Red Desert and aided them in discovering the lost art of Thaumaturgy. Although Jamba has been somewhat lax in the working of miracles since then, he is still well thought of by most of the people of Carantheum.

The Dracartans count as their friends the Djaffir (cohorts during their ancestors' early days as nomads) and the various peoples of the Seven Kingdoms. Carantheum's enemies, on the other hand, are somewhat more numerous. The Necromancers of Raj blatantly covet Carantheum's riches, and have launched attacks against the Dracartans in the past. Though none of these assaults has met with any degree of success thus far, the monomaniacal Khadun has sworn to annihilate Carantheum at any cost. To the east, the Sauran tribes of the volcanic hills are a threat from time to time. The Quan Empire is also believed to have an overly acute interest in the Red Desert region, as does the mercantile nation of Faradun.

Travel to Carantheum, despite efforts to improve conditions, remains a rather perilous proposition. From the east, the only practical routes lead

through territories claimed either by the Saurans or the fanatical Rajans. The ancient Wilderlands Road, sole causeway between Carantheum and the western lands, is beset by bandits, wild beasts, and other dangers. As such, the safest means of traveling to Carantheum is in the company of a large, well-armed caravan.

While engaged in an ill-advised search for the sarcophagus of an ancient Dracartan thaumaturge, I chanced to encounter one of the more insidious dangers inherent to the deserts of this region. The rogue magician Crystabal had volunteered to lead the expedition, the first of many mistakes we would make on this journey. In short time, we were hopelessly lost, a sudden sandstorm and Crystabal's overestimation of his abilities having contributed in equal part to this predicament. Our supply of water was diminishing at an alarming rate when further ahead we spotted an oasis surrounded by swaying date palms.

With newfound vigor, we made for the shaded desert haven.

Crystabal, eager to vindicate himself, took the lead. He knelt to drinking what seemed to be a cool spring, and suddenly found himself in the grasp of two hideous, horned humanoids. Fortunately, the rogue magician's swordplay exceeded in skill

his talents as a guide, and with help from others in the group, the monsters were dispatched. The oasis faded from sight at the same time, however, causing our party the greatest dismay.

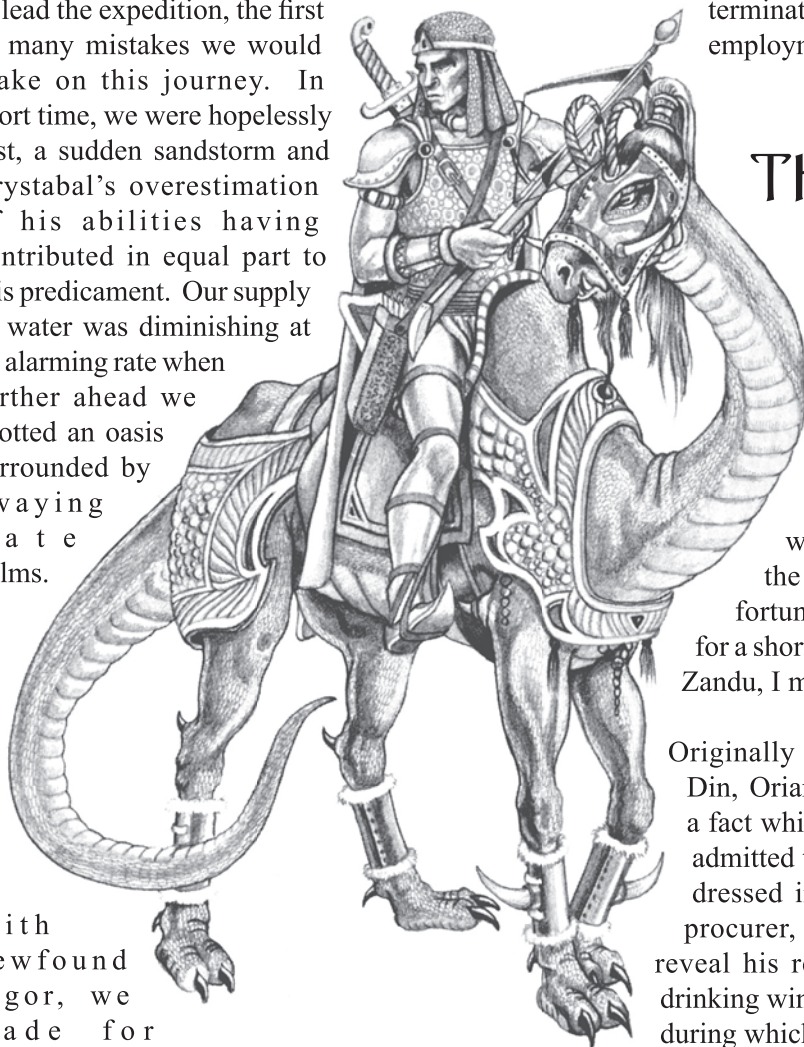
The arrival of a band of nomadic Djaffir merchants happily served to reverse our fortunes. From the Djaffir, we learned that the creatures who had assaulted our party were Sand Demons; vampiric monsters who hide in the dunes, creating mirages and other illusions to lure unsuspecting victims closer to their lairs. We all felt lucky to be alive, and were in similar agreement with respect to me termination of our incompetent guide's employment.

THE CRESCENT ISLES

Regrettably, an aversion to unreliable sea vessels and deep waters kept me from visiting many of the islands which lie in the waters surrounding the Talislantan continent. It was fortunate indeed that, while staying for a short time in the port city of Zanth in Zandu, I met Orianos in a seaside tavern.

Originally from the tiny island of Gao-Din, Orianos was a thief by profession, a fact which he readily and even proudly admitted to me. When I met him he was dressed in the veiled robes of a Farad procurer, though he did not choose to reveal his reasons for doing so. We sat drinking wine and talking for several hours, during which time he told me many tales of his travels with the Sea-Rogues of Gao-Din.

In turn, I told him of my plans to explore the continent, at which he suggested that perhaps we might chance to meet again in the course of our travels. We drank a toast and wished each other luck in our respective endeavors.



At this, Orianos excused himself, saying that he would return momentarily after performing a brief but necessary ritual. I waited, however to no avail. Finally, at the insistence of the tavern owner, I settled our account and took my leave; poorer in some respects, but richer with regard to my knowledge of the islands and seas of Talislanta, a portion of which I now reveal to the reader:


The Crescent Isles are a chain of small islands located in the northern reaches of the Far Seas. Many are small and relatively insignificant atolls, appearing on no known map or sea chart. Some, ages-old coral reefs or mounds of water-worn stone, are rarely visible above the waves, and are a hazard to all but the most experienced or prescient navigators. Those islands of note, whether in fact or sailors' legends, are delineated in the following text:

Pana-Ku

Pana-Ku is a volcanic isle, wreathed in jungle and ringed by a dozen or more reefs and lesser

atolls. The isle is home to the Na-Ku, a folk of horrific appearance and habits. Tall and angular, the Na-Ku have indigo-blue skin, yellowish eyes, and gaunt, skull-like visages. Both the males and females are fanged, and have clawed hands, hunched torsos, and serpentine tails. Among the most evil of the humanoid races, the Na-Ku are cannibals who relish eating their victims alive. They revere Aberon, the self-proclaimed ruler of all Talislantan demons, and erect massive stone effigies in his honor. Armed with poison-arrows (made of the branches of the venomwood tree, a rare species found only on Pana-Ku), the Na-Ku prowl the waters surrounding the Crescent Isles by night. They prey on humanoid beings of all sorts, whom they take alive and bring back to their island domain. There, at the base of the isle's largest volcano, the Na-Ku hold grisly feasts presided over by their king; a horrible half-demon, fattened on the living prey fed to him by his vile subjects. It is said that the king of the Na-Ku sits upon a throne studded with rare black diamonds, though confirmation of this tale would seem an endeavor





best suited to those whose thirst for adventure is exceeded only by an utter lack of concern for their personal well-being.

Fahn

Fahn is a beautiful island, considered a veritable paradise by those who have visited there. It is populated by a tribe of frail, albino humanoids known as the Sawila. The Sawila dwell in huts cleverly made of woven vines, which, suspended from tall trees, sway gently in the wind. A primitive and peaceful folk, they wear elaborate costumes of colorful feathers, designed to protect their fair skin from the rays of Talislanta's twin suns. Song and dance are integral facets of their culture, which forbids the use of violence for any reason. The Sawila are preyed upon by the cannibals of Pana-Ku and by slavers from the far-western isle of Imria. The lovely Sawila females are valued as courtesans, and bring as much as two thousand gold lumens each in some lands. The only defenses which the Sawila employ against such threats are their enchanting songs, which possess the ability to effect changes in the weather, among other things.

Donango

Donango is a peaceful seeming isle similar in appearance to Fahn. In fact, less-than-expert navigators have been known to mistake this island for its placid counterpart. As Donango fairly seethes with hordes of sea demons, such errors seldom go unnoticed for any great length of time. The sea demons of Donango are known to scavenge treasure from the sunken hulks of ancient ships, which they keep hidden in caves scattered throughout the jungle. Certain adventurous types (most lacking in what is commonly referred to as "intelligence") have sometimes been known to come here in the hope of making their fortune.

The Mangar Isles

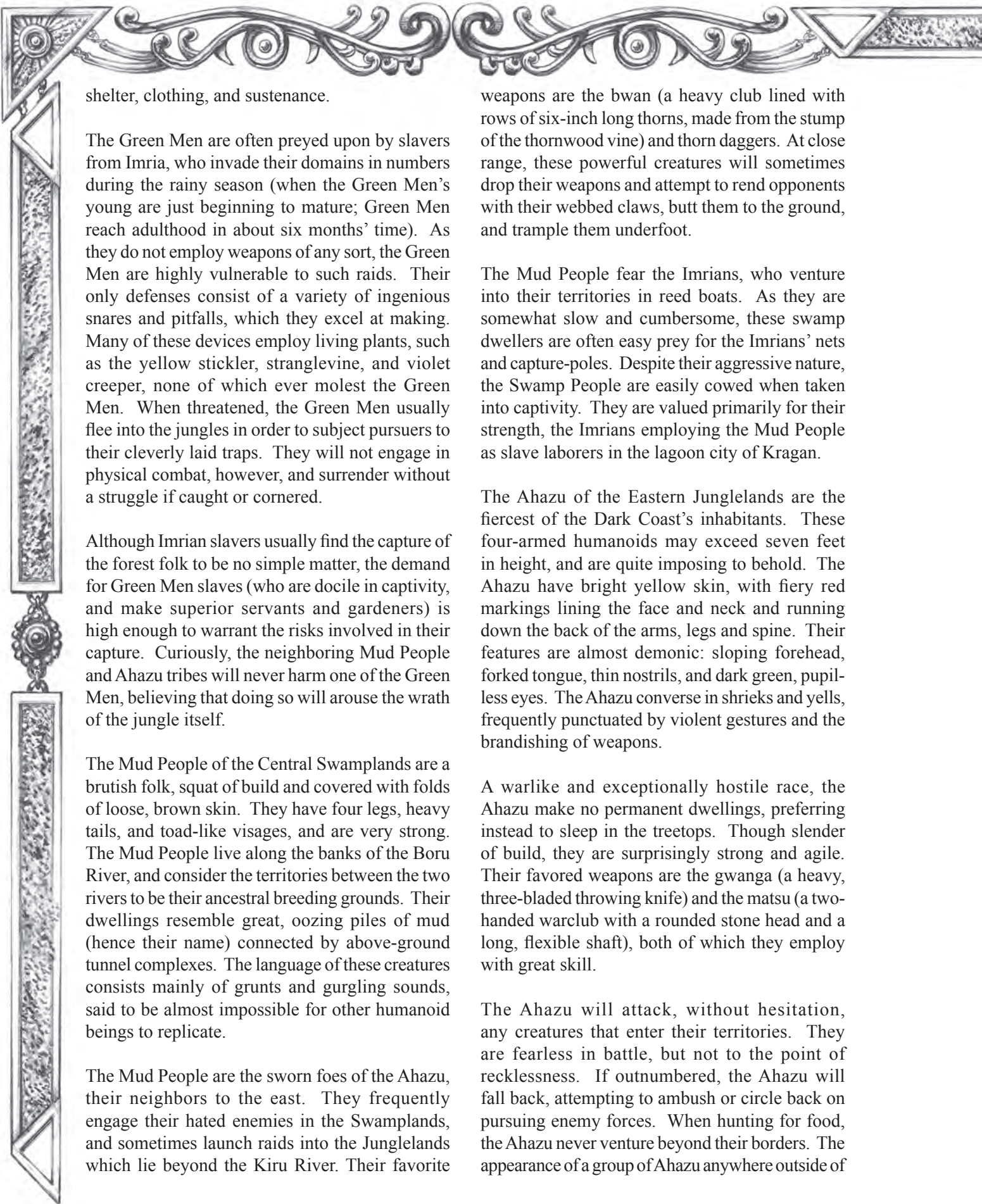
The Mangars are a cluster of four small islands located in close proximity to one another. Covered in jungle, the hidden lagoons and grottos on these islands are home to numerous small pirate bands, known collectively as the Mangar Corsairs. Justly renowned as murderers and cut-throats, the Mangar

Corsairs are the bane of ships that must traverse the waters of the Far Seas. There are a number of different bands, all rivals to some degree. In lean times they prey on each other, occasionally fighting over potential plunder. The make-up of these bands is often quite diverse: slaves stolen from Imrian vessels, shanghaied sailors, exiles from foreign lands, and even Chana witchmen have been found amongst the crews of the dark-skinned, shaven-headed Mangar. Like most sensible seafarers, the Corsairs of this region steer clear of Nefaratus, giving the Black Savant's eerie vessels a wide berth. Neither will the Mangar Corsairs harass the Sea-Rogues of Gao with whom they share certain common interests. The Corsairs have no such agreement with the bestial cannibals of nearby Pana-Ku, whose dugout canoes they destroy at every given opportunity. The sleek-hulled carracks employed by these piratical folk are arguably among the swiftest of Talislantan watercraft, and should be avoided at all costs.

THE DARK COAST

To the south of the Wilderness of Zaran lies the region known as the Dark Coast. Hemmed in to the north by the low-lying Topaz Mountains, the terrain here is predominantly thick and tangled jungle, interspersed with sections of marshland and tropical forest. The Boru and Kiru Rivers effectively divide the land into three separate territories: the Western Rain Forests, home of the Green Men; the Central Swamplands, home of the Mud People; and the Eastern Junglelands, home of the fierce Ahazu.

The Green Men are peaceful beings, small in stature, with skin, hair, and eyes all of varying shades of green. They dress in abbreviated garments made of woven mosses, and make their homes in the boles of great, living plants (called D'Oko). The language of these simple folk is most pleasant to the ear, being reminiscent of the music of wooden flutes. They have a symbiotic relationship with many types of plants, which they tend with great care and affection. In return, the Green Men derive all that they need to survive in the Rain Forests:



shelter, clothing, and sustenance.

The Green Men are often preyed upon by slavers from Imria, who invade their domains in numbers during the rainy season (when the Green Men's young are just beginning to mature; Green Men reach adulthood in about six months' time). As they do not employ weapons of any sort, the Green Men are highly vulnerable to such raids. Their only defenses consist of a variety of ingenious snares and pitfalls, which they excel at making. Many of these devices employ living plants, such as the yellow stickler, stranglevine, and violet creeper, none of which ever molest the Green Men. When threatened, the Green Men usually flee into the jungles in order to subject pursuers to their cleverly laid traps. They will not engage in physical combat, however, and surrender without a struggle if caught or cornered.

Although Imrian slavers usually find the capture of the forest folk to be no simple matter, the demand for Green Men slaves (who are docile in captivity, and make superior servants and gardeners) is high enough to warrant the risks involved in their capture. Curiously, the neighboring Mud People and Ahazu tribes will never harm one of the Green Men, believing that doing so will arouse the wrath of the jungle itself.

The Mud People of the Central Swamplands are a brutish folk, squat of build and covered with folds of loose, brown skin. They have four legs, heavy tails, and toad-like visages, and are very strong. The Mud People live along the banks of the Boru River, and consider the territories between the two rivers to be their ancestral breeding grounds. Their dwellings resemble great, oozing piles of mud (hence their name) connected by above-ground tunnel complexes. The language of these creatures consists mainly of grunts and gurgling sounds, said to be almost impossible for other humanoid beings to replicate.

The Mud People are the sworn foes of the Ahazu, their neighbors to the east. They frequently engage their hated enemies in the Swamplands, and sometimes launch raids into the Jungles which lie beyond the Kiru River. Their favorite

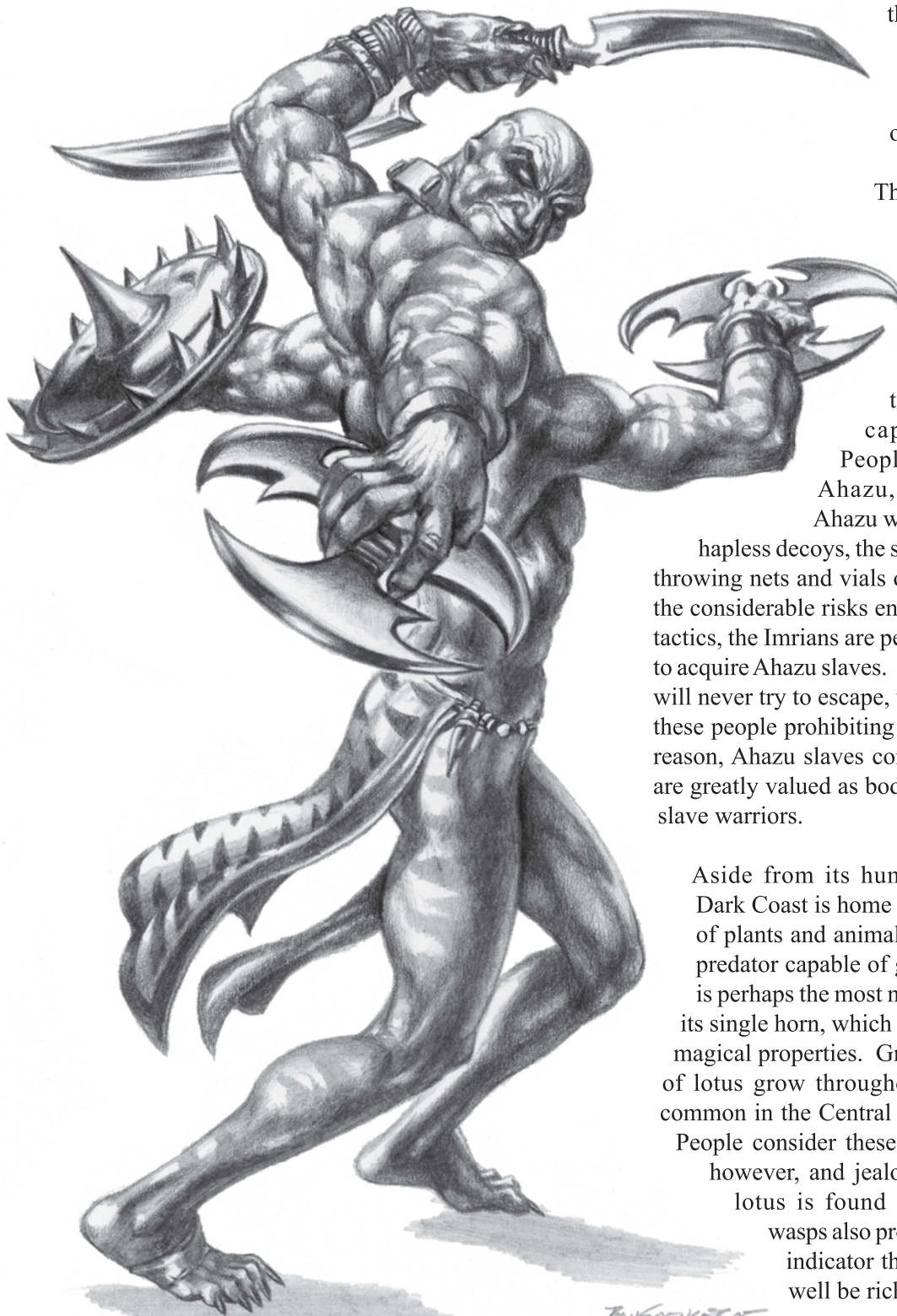
weapons are the bwan (a heavy club lined with rows of six-inch long thorns, made from the stump of the thornwood vine) and thorn daggers. At close range, these powerful creatures will sometimes drop their weapons and attempt to rend opponents with their webbed claws, butt them to the ground, and trample them underfoot.

The Mud People fear the Imrians, who venture into their territories in reed boats. As they are somewhat slow and cumbersome, these swamp dwellers are often easy prey for the Imrians' nets and capture-poles. Despite their aggressive nature, the Swamp People are easily cowed when taken into captivity. They are valued primarily for their strength, the Imrians employing the Mud People as slave laborers in the lagoon city of Kragan.

The Ahazu of the Eastern Jungles are the fiercest of the Dark Coast's inhabitants. These four-armed humanoids may exceed seven feet in height, and are quite imposing to behold. The Ahazu have bright yellow skin, with fiery red markings lining the face and neck and running down the back of the arms, legs and spine. Their features are almost demonic: sloping forehead, forked tongue, thin nostrils, and dark green, pupil-less eyes. The Ahazu converse in shrieks and yells, frequently punctuated by violent gestures and the brandishing of weapons.

A warlike and exceptionally hostile race, the Ahazu make no permanent dwellings, preferring instead to sleep in the treetops. Though slender of build, they are surprisingly strong and agile. Their favored weapons are the gwanga (a heavy, three-bladed throwing knife) and the matsu (a two-handed warclub with a rounded stone head and a long, flexible shaft), both of which they employ with great skill.

The Ahazu will attack, without hesitation, any creatures that enter their territories. They are fearless in battle, but not to the point of recklessness. If outnumbered, the Ahazu will fall back, attempting to ambush or circle back on pursuing enemy forces. When hunting for food, the Ahazu never venture beyond their borders. The appearance of a group of Ahazu anywhere outside of



the Eastern Jungles is a certain indicator that they are on the warpath, either launching a raid against the Mud People or attacking a fleeing opponent.

The Imrians never venture into Ahazu land except in heavily armed groups of fifty or more individuals. Rather than engage the Ahazu in battle, the Imrians employ captured bands of Mud People, dire enemies of the Ahazu, as decoys. Once an Ahazu war party has engaged the hapless decoys, the slavers attack, employing throwing nets and vials of toxic powder. Despite the considerable risks entailed in the use of these tactics, the Imrians are persistent in their attempts to acquire Ahazu slaves. Once captured, an Ahazu will never try to escape, the rigid warrior-code of these people prohibiting such practices. For this reason, Ahazu slaves command high prices, and are greatly valued as bodyguards, gladiators, and slave warriors.

Aside from its humanoid population, the Dark Coast is home to many unusual species of plants and animals. The sivian, a vicious predator capable of gliding from tree to tree, is perhaps the most notorious. It is hunted for its single horn, which is reputed to have potent magical properties. Green and scarlet varieties of lotus grow throughout the region, and are common in the Central Swamplands. The Mud People consider these plants to be delicacies, however, and jealously guard areas where lotus is found in abundance. Amber wasps also proliferate in this region, an indicator that the Swamplands may well be rich in amber nuggets.

Zandir legends associate the Dark Coast region with the Baratus, an

ancient race of sea-faring thieves who once roamed the Azure Ocean, preying on merchant vessels and traders. According to the most popular tales, the Baratus buried countless chests of stolen riches in the Eastern Jungleslands. Certain Talislantan historians believe that the greater part of this treasure remains moldering in the ground, awaiting discovery by some fortunate adventurer.

DJAFFA

Surrounded on three sides by the Wilderlands of Zaran, the land of Djaffa consists primarily of scrub plains and desert. With the exception of a few scattered oases, practically nothing grows in this arid region. Djaffa is home to the nomadic peoples known as the Djaffir, who are divided into two tribes: merchant traders and bandits.

By far the more numerous of the two tribes, the Djaffir merchants are generally regarded as

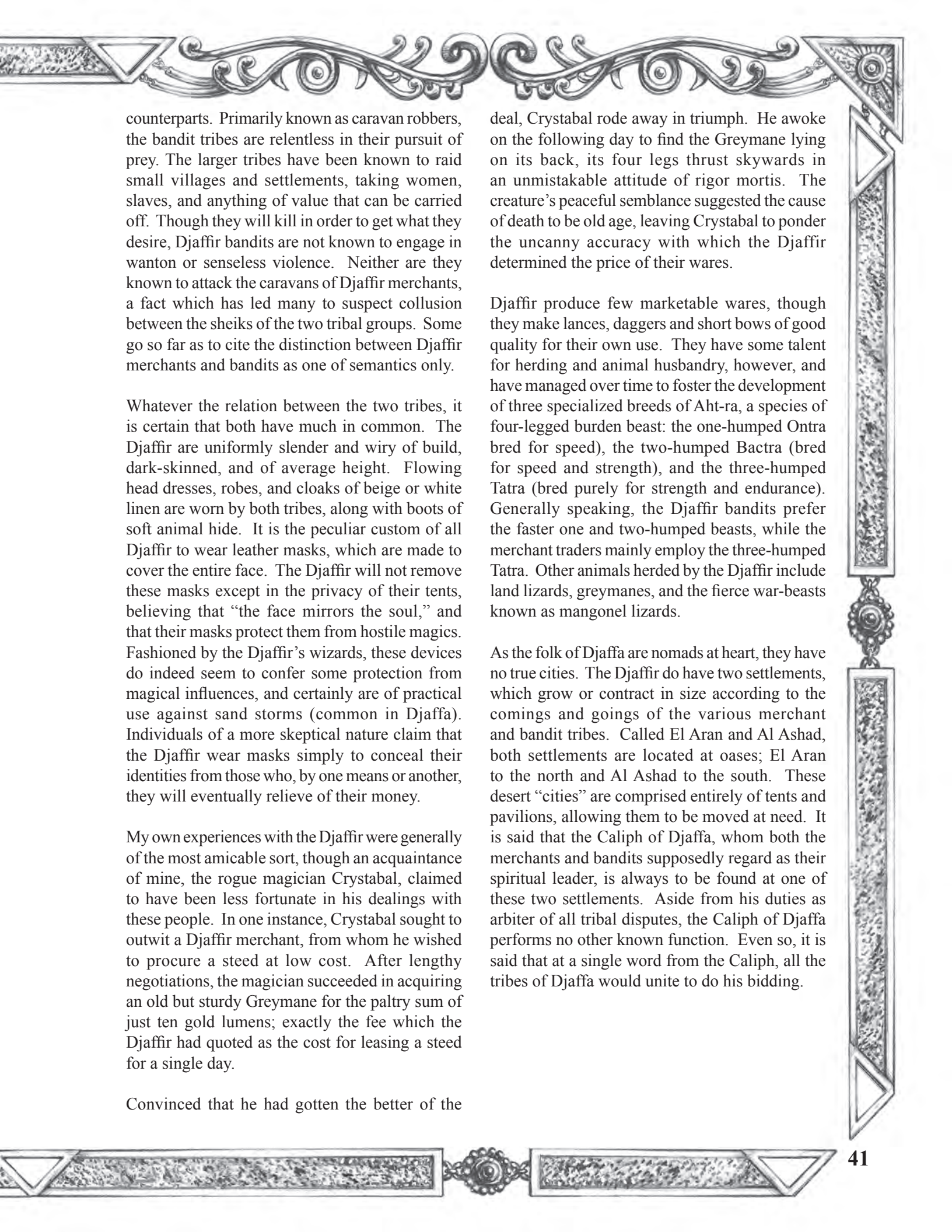
the shrewdest and most skillful traders on the continent. Their caravans carry goods to and from the civilized countries of Talislanta, from as far west as Zandu to the eastern lands of Quan and even Xanadas. It is said that the Djaffir merchant tribes will travel anywhere, regardless of the dangers, as long as there is a profit to be made. In truth, the only trails found in certain remote regions are those established over the years by the caravans of these nomadic traders.

The Djaffir bandit tribes, though few in number, are nearly as persistent as their mercantile

***Note:** We Djaffir have gained even more trading rights to the East since the fall of the Quan. It seems the Kang have great need of currency to fund their various military campaigns and have, therefore, been more accommodating to myself and my peers.*

— Jalal Ibn Mahood





counterparts. Primarily known as caravan robbers, the bandit tribes are relentless in their pursuit of prey. The larger tribes have been known to raid small villages and settlements, taking women, slaves, and anything of value that can be carried off. Though they will kill in order to get what they desire, Djaffir bandits are not known to engage in wanton or senseless violence. Neither are they known to attack the caravans of Djaffir merchants, a fact which has led many to suspect collusion between the sheiks of the two tribal groups. Some go so far as to cite the distinction between Djaffir merchants and bandits as one of semantics only.

Whatever the relation between the two tribes, it is certain that both have much in common. The Djaffir are uniformly slender and wiry of build, dark-skinned, and of average height. Flowing head dresses, robes, and cloaks of beige or white linen are worn by both tribes, along with boots of soft animal hide. It is the peculiar custom of all Djaffir to wear leather masks, which are made to cover the entire face. The Djaffir will not remove these masks except in the privacy of their tents, believing that "the face mirrors the soul," and that their masks protect them from hostile magics. Fashioned by the Djaffir's wizards, these devices do indeed seem to confer some protection from magical influences, and certainly are of practical use against sand storms (common in Djaffa). Individuals of a more skeptical nature claim that the Djaffir wear masks simply to conceal their identities from those who, by one means or another, they will eventually relieve of their money.

My own experiences with the Djaffir were generally of the most amicable sort, though an acquaintance of mine, the rogue magician Crystabal, claimed to have been less fortunate in his dealings with these people. In one instance, Crystabal sought to outwit a Djaffir merchant, from whom he wished to procure a steed at low cost. After lengthy negotiations, the magician succeeded in acquiring an old but sturdy Greymane for the paltry sum of just ten gold lumens; exactly the fee which the Djaffir had quoted as the cost for leasing a steed for a single day.

Convinced that he had gotten the better of the

deal, Crystabal rode away in triumph. He awoke on the following day to find the Greymane lying on its back, its four legs thrust skywards in an unmistakable attitude of rigor mortis. The creature's peaceful semblance suggested the cause of death to be old age, leaving Crystabal to ponder the uncanny accuracy with which the Djaffir determined the price of their wares.

Djaffir produce few marketable wares, though they make lances, daggers and short bows of good quality for their own use. They have some talent for herding and animal husbandry, however, and have managed over time to foster the development of three specialized breeds of Aht-ra, a species of four-legged burden beast: the one-humped Ontra (bred for speed), the two-humped Bactra (bred for speed and strength), and the three-humped Tatra (bred purely for strength and endurance). Generally speaking, the Djaffir bandits prefer the faster one and two-humped beasts, while the merchant traders mainly employ the three-humped Tatra. Other animals herded by the Djaffir include land lizards, greymanes, and the fierce war-beasts known as mangonel lizards.

As the folk of Djaffa are nomads at heart, they have no true cities. The Djaffir do have two settlements, which grow or contract in size according to the comings and goings of the various merchant and bandit tribes. Called El Aran and Al Ashad, both settlements are located at oases; El Aran to the north and Al Ashad to the south. These desert "cities" are comprised entirely of tents and pavilions, allowing them to be moved at need. It is said that the Caliph of Djaffa, whom both the merchants and bandits supposedly regard as their spiritual leader, is always to be found at one of these two settlements. Aside from his duties as arbiter of all tribal disputes, the Caliph of Djaffa performs no other known function. Even so, it is said that at a single word from the Caliph, all the tribes of Djaffa would unite to do his bidding.




FARADUN

Faradun is an exotic land located on the southern coast of Talislanta and bordered to the north by the rugged peaks of the Topaz Mountains. To the east lie two topographical anomalies: the shimmering Sea of Glass and the Emerald Mountain. Arid and hostile terrain dominates the north central region, gradually giving way to patches of jungle along the coast. Blown by winds from the Far Seas, Faradun's climate is uniformly hot and oppressive.

The people who live here, known as the Farad, are a dark and saturnine folk of above average height. They have flint-grey skin, stony visages and narrow eyes as black as coal. The customary mode of dress for Farad males includes elaborate head dress, voluminous robes, broad sashes, and velvet boots; all hung with ornate tassels, fringe, and colored glass beads. Men over the age of twenty wear their beards in twin braids bound with silver fastenings, the length and amount of ornamentation employed being considered signs of

status. The Farad women wear long silken gowns, veils, necklaces of silver loops, and rings on each finger. Both the males and females exhibit an air of haughtiness and arrogance that might charitably be described as "distant" or "aloof."

Faradun is perhaps the wealthiest mercantile state on the continent, benefiting from its strategic location as a convenient stop-over point for ships sailing between the Eastern and Western Lands. The sprawling port of Tarun, with its ominous and impregnable defenses, is the capitol and center for all trade in the land. Through the towering seagates of Tarun pass the merchant ships of many nations: Imrian slave vessels, Zandir gem dealers, Sunra dragon barques bearing gold and riches from the Quan Empire, Aamanian ore traders, and even Corsair vessels from the Mangar Isles and Gao-Din; the Farad are notable for their singularly unscrupulous business practices, and will buy or sell anything from anyone, with no questions asked. (Note: Slightly out of date. Tarun no longer sees any merchant traffic from the windships of Cymril. The Seven Kingdoms and Carantheum



have both severed trading ties with Faradun due to their theft of windship arcanology and later sale of same to the Rajans. – Quen).

The societal hierarchy of Faradun reflects the Farad's utter obsession with mercantilism. The ruler of Faradun, called the Cral, wields absolute power, and is responsible for determining market prices for all goods which are to be bought or sold in Tarun. Second in line are the Monopolists, individuals given power by the Cral to determine the availability of the various wares handled by the Farad. Each is responsible for a single commodity, such as slaves, contraband, gemstones, metals, narcotics, and so forth. Some few are wizards, who dabble in magic in order to further their business interests and cartels.

Next come the Usurers, who lend money at exorbitant rates to finance all commercial ventures approved by the Monopolists. Dependent upon the Usurers are the Procurers, who travel far and wide, acquiring merchandise from various sources and establishing new trade contacts. Finally, there are the Mongers: shop-owners, peddlers and hawkers who make up the vast majority of Faradun's citizenry. Few Farad are employed in any non-mercantile line of work. The country's labor force is comprised almost entirely of foreigners, slaves, convicted felons, and burden beasts, while the army and navy are manned by highly paid foreign mercenaries.

The Farad have a religion of sorts, revering the god Avar, deity of material wealth and personal gain. Avar's followers do not erect temples in his name, but prostrate themselves before golden idols purchased in the shops of Tarun. Farad merchants pray to Avar that they might obtain more lucrative contracts than their competitors, and that their profits might increase in proportion to their desires. Deception and treachery are considered astute business tactics, and greed an admirable trait.

Although the Farad are involved to some degree in importing and exporting goods they much prefer to allow such business to come to them. In order to stimulate this type of trade, the Farad make every effort to attract merchants and traders from other

lands to the city of Tarun. Prices for food, drink and lodging are quite reasonable and tariffs and duties are minimal. Further, any sort of entertainment or diversion imaginable can be arranged through the auspices of the Farad Procurers, who claim to be able to grant their customers' fondest desires... for a price. Wealthy foreigners and prospective clients are feted in grand style by the Farad, who can be quite charming when it suits their needs. Conversely, the Farad possess a capacity for cold-blooded, emotionless behavior that is matched only by the barbaric folk of Harak.

My visit to Faradun, while marred to some extent by an unfortunate sea voyage (Editor's note: See Gao-Din), was illustrative of the dual nature of the Farad. As is the custom in the port city of Tarun, our ship was hailed before it could enter the harbor, and boarded by grim looking Za mercenaries. All merchandise on board our vessel was examined and inventoried, and each passenger questioned with regard to his or her reason for traveling to Faradun.

Rather than enter into a long and possibly tedious explanation of my own diverse motives, I described myself as a purveyor of rarities and eccentricities; not an entirely inaccurate portrayal, and one which I deemed innocuous enough to avoid attracting undue attention. To my surprise, this statement aroused great interest in the mercenaries. Horns were sounded, and a gold-chased pleasure barge was summoned to take me to shore at once.

The barge docked at a private facility, whereupon I was carried by slave-borne palanquin to an exquisite manse decorated with inlaid mother-of-pearl, cinnabar and jade. Here, I was plied with the costliest wines and delicacies, laved with scented oils and given fresh garments of plush, cinnamon colored velvet. Concubines of heart-rending beauty attended my every need, until at last I was summoned to dine with the owner of the manse. Servants escorted me to a splendid dining hall where for the first time I met my gracious host, a Farad monopolist of regal bearing. It was then that I realized that an error had been made, and that I had been mistaken for some important and long-awaited guest. The hall erupted in a chorus

of shouts and accusations, and I took to my heels, escaping only by means of an undignified exit through the sewers of Tarun.

The coastal jungles of Faradun are best avoided, primarily due to the presence of sivians, death's head vipers, and other unpleasant creatures. Costly k'tallah, tantalus and scarlet lotus grow here in substantial quantities, a fact not lost on the Farad Procurers. Oblivious to the dangers inherent in such work, the Farad send work crews comprised of slaves and convicted felons into the jungles to gather herbs. By careful calculation, the Procurers have determined that the profits realized by harvesting the jungles outweigh the cost in lost slaves by an acceptable margin.

Beyond the edge of the jungle lie lands so arid and barren that not even snakes and vermin dwell there. Ghoulish necrophages, shadow wights, and unclean spirits, being somewhat less particular with regard to their accommodations, haunt the region in force. Called the "Ghostlands" by the Farad, this area has long been used as a place of banishment for those convicted of embezzling funds (a crime considered more heinous than murder in Faradun).

Further east lies the Emerald Mountain, which rises majestically from the center of the Sea of Glass. The so-called "sea" is actually a great expanse of fused green glass. The folk of Cymril pay Faradun a handsome price for the privilege of mining this green crystal, which is utilized extensively in Cymrilian construction. There is always work available here for miners, guards, laborers and caravan drivers, though amenities for such positions are somewhat limited. Windships laden with the finest pieces of green glass disembark from this area once every month or so. (Note: As mentioned above, the Cymrilians have halted all diplomatic and trade ties with the Farad over the suspected theft of Cymrilian windship arcanology. To that end, the mines on the Sea of Glass have all but been abandoned.. Many Farad have been bankrupted by these events. – Quen)

The Emerald Mountain is, much to the Farad's dismay, not truly made of emerald. Neither is it


made of green glass, but rather some sort of hard, metallic green ore. The Farad once considered erecting a mining installation at the base of the mountain Kaf, but felt it better not to test the veracity of the old legend, which describes the cloud covered summit of the mountain as being home to the diabolical Shaitan. Adventurers from faraway lands sometimes attempt to scale the Emerald Mountain, seeking the favor of the Shaitan. Never numerous, the ranks of these stalwart heroes seem destined to dwindle further still.

GAO-DIN

Gao-Din is a small and rocky isle located some ten miles off the western coast of Mog. It is a dismal place, with treacherous swamplands and jungles lining its coastal regions. Inland, limestone cliffs rise up from the murky vegetation, culminating in a great, central mound of stone. Here, looking out across the Azure Ocean, stands the most curious of Talislanta's settlements: the Rogue City of Gao.

Formerly a penal colony of the old Phaedran Empire, Gao was abandoned by its makers during the Cult Wars of the early New Age. The prisoners incarcerated in this heavily fortified installation, mostly thieves and political dissidents, were simply left behind to fend for themselves. Showing a degree of ingenuity born of desperation, the prisoners salvaged an abandoned Phaedran vessel and embarked upon a career as sea-roving pirates. Soon thereafter, Gao-Din was declared an independent city state, and the Rogue City of Gao was made its capital.

Since that time the Sea-Rogues of Gao have prospered, primarily at the expense of such folk as the Imrian slavers and the Farad. The Sea-Rogues consider themselves to be quite gallant, their swashbuckling antics at the very least setting them apart from the murderous tactics employed by the Mangar Corsairs of the Far Seas. The formal penal colony of Gao has grown into a city of sorts, its old fortifications expanded upon and modified for purposes of defense. The city's current population,



comprised mostly of thieves, outcasts and freed slaves, is a remarkable admixture of racial and cultural types: defrocked Aamanian priests, Zandir charlatans, Thrall mercenaries, Green Men, Ahazu, Batrean concubines, and many others.

Rivals and even deadly enemies under normal circumstances, the inhabitants of the Rogue City generally co-exist with a minimum of difficulty on Gao-Din. At least part of the reason for this seems due to the city's unique form of government. The Rogue City of Gao is ruled by an individual known as "the King (or Queen) of Thieves," elected by popular vote once each year. The king's primary duties are to arbitrate disputes, set fair prices for black market and contraband goods, and enforce the three basic tenets of the "thieves' code of honor". Briefly stated, these are: 1) it is illegal to kill a fellow thief (i.e., citizen of Gao) while in the city proper; 2) it is illegal to reveal the seven secret passwords to any non-citizen; 3) it is illegal to steal any item worth more than twenty gold lumens from a fellow thief while in the city proper.

The punishment for failure to comply with the code's tenets is variable, based on the king's appraisal of the exact circumstances surrounding the incident in question. In most cases, however, individuals found guilty of breaking either the first or second tenets are bound, gagged, and fed to the sea demons. Those found guilty of breaking the third tenet are given two weeks to reimburse the victim of the theft three times over. Failure or inability to comply with this edict once again brings the sea demons' alternative to bear.

The Sea-Rogues' system of justice is said to work as well as any other, and bears the distinct advantage of not having to maintain costly facilities for the incarceration of incorrigible felons. An unfortunate side-effect of these policies is that, in order to avoid a high incidence of theft, most of the city's black marketeers and shop owners rarely value any of their wares at less than twenty-one gold lumens. On the plus side, the sea demons who live in the waters around the island are rather fond of the inhabitants of the city, and generally refrain from attacking their vessels. As the Sea-Rogues also feed captured Imrian slavers to the demons,

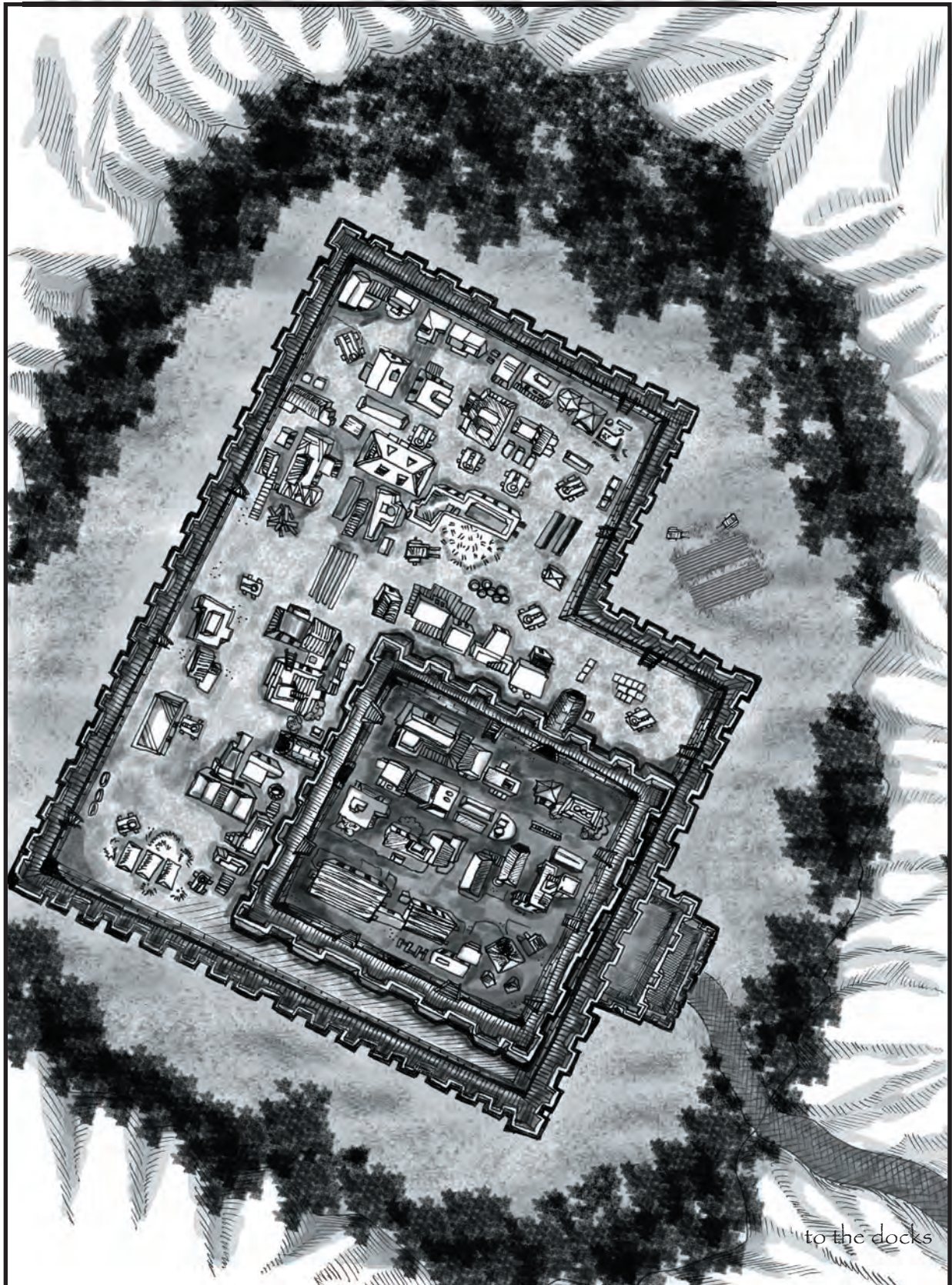
relations between the two races often border on cordiality.

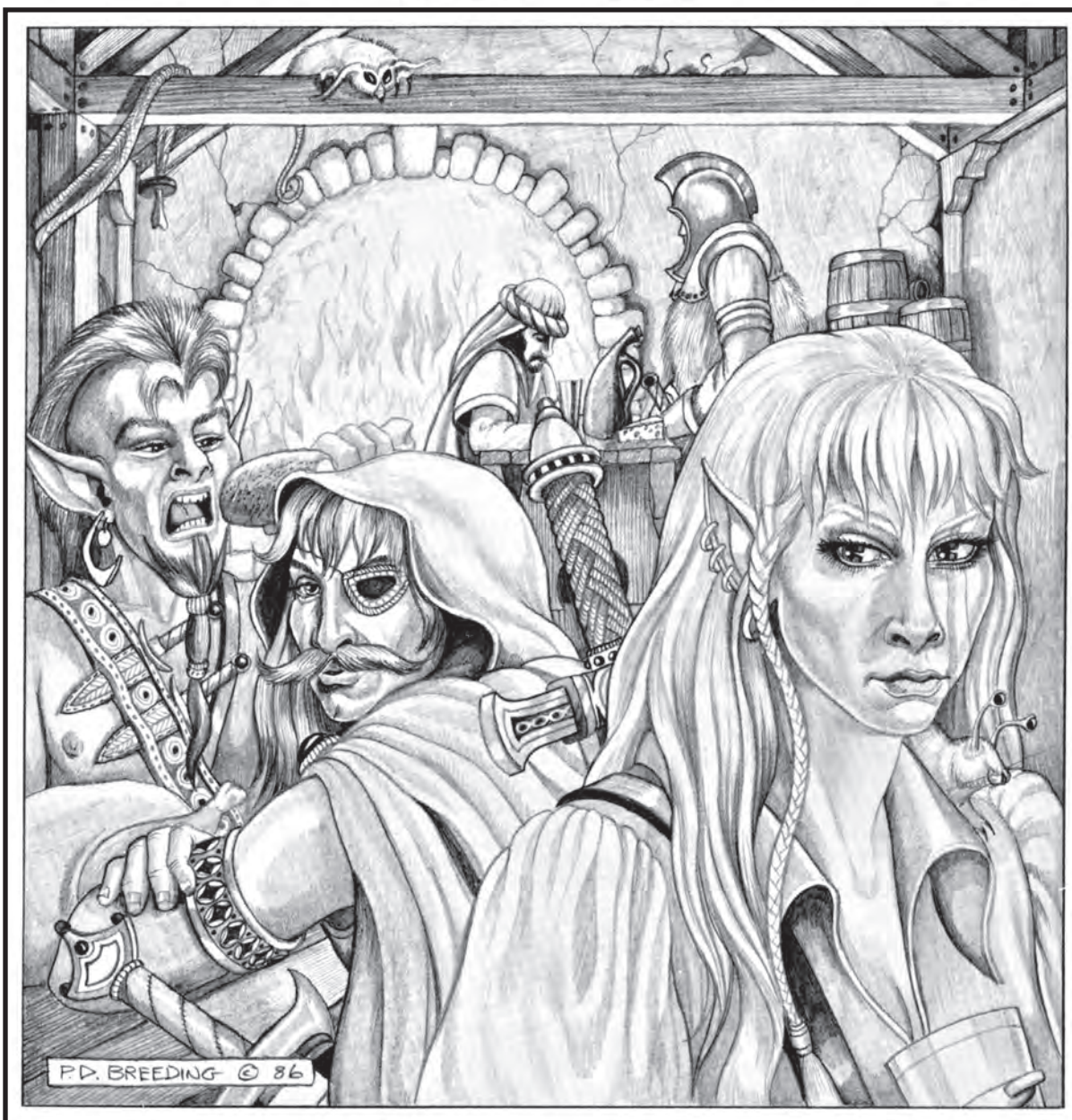
Other strictures governing the citizens of Gao are minimal, most being related to economic or cultural concerns. The government is allowed a ten percent cut of all booty captured by ships which utilize the city's walled-in harbor facilities, but does not otherwise burden the population with taxes or tariffs. While polygamy is permitted by male and female citizens, adultery is frowned upon. Individuals accused of such an indiscretion often simply get married, thereby avoiding possible scandal. As a result of the city's liberal policies concerning marriage, individuals born in Gao may have any number of legal "fathers" and "mothers," and countless relatives of various races and nationalities. Restrictions pertaining to religious beliefs are non-existent, and many diverse cults and religions proliferate in the Rogue City.

Gao citizenship is not easily obtained, though technically available to any thief, outcast, or scoundrel who seeks it. In order to reduce the chance of spies or informants infiltrating Gao's close-knit society, all individuals applying for citizenship must allow themselves to be subjected to scrutiny by the king's personal advisors, a group traditionally comprised of fellow thieves, wizards, astrologers, and the like. Those who pass the test are granted citizenship without further delay, and taught the seven secret passwords required to gain access to the city. Those who fail are seldom heard from again except as regards the sea demons.

Officially, the city state of Gao has no formal relations with any other government, religious group, or secret society. Neither does Gao rule out the possibility of association (usually only on a temporary basis) with almost any government, group, or individual, providing there is a profit to be made by entering into such a relationship. Only the Imrians, Rajans and Aamanians seem exempt from this policy, the Sea-Rogues having a definite aversion to slavers and religious fanatics. Gao-Din extends a degree of professional courtesy to the fierce Mangar Corsairs, which amounts to an agreement that neither will prey on the other's ships. As far as is known, the Sea-Rogues have

THE ROGUE CITY OF GAO-DIN





no contact with the mysterious Black Savants, whose dark vessels occasionally ply the waters of the Azure Ocean.

Forced by circumstances beyond my control (and too convoluted to divulge here) to obtain passage on a Zandir merchant ship, I had a chance to examine the methods of the Sea-Rogues firsthand. We were headed for Faradun, and rounding the southernmost tip of Mog, when the red-sailed Rogue vessel was first sighted. The Zandir captain responded by ordering full sail astern and directing his crew to assume stations suitable for battle.

Having no little aversion to sea travel in the first place, I viewed this development with a marked lack of enthusiasm, an attitude which also seemed evident in the faces of most of the crewmen.

Nonetheless, the captain would not be swayed from action. Mounting the ship's forecastle, he struck a defiant pose and called out a challenge to the approaching pirate vessel. In the next instant, he was swept away by an immense stone fired from the Sea-Rogue's ballista; a remarkable shot, actually, considering the distance between the two ships. The first mate, relegated by default

to a position of command, ordered a general surrender. The Rogues overtook our vessel and leapt onboard with a great show of flamboyance. Their captain, a gallant fellow attired in dashing cloak and silken hose, politely bade all passengers to divest themselves of their valuables. When all had complied, the Rogues gathered up their spoils and departed, the captain enhancing his exit by means of a low, sweeping bow. This, I realized, was Orianos, whom I had met some weeks earlier in the port city of Zanth.

CITY GUIDE TO GAO

"I don't care if the fiend smiled and bowed most dramatically when he plundered my ship! A well-mannered pirate is still a pirate, you gibbering idiot!" - Mar, Enraged Zann Sea Captain

A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO GAO

The Populace

The Rogue City of Gao is a lively and colorful place, the city's population of approximately 4,000 inhabitants formed from an eclectic and motley array of swashbucklers, criminals, scoundrels, renegades, and free slaves. While the majority (60%) are of obvious Phaedran descent to some degree (with the same copper skin and black hair as their Aamanian and Zandir cousins), they rub shoulders peacefully with renegade Mangar, free Batreans, escaped Thiasians, and such exotics as Sawila, in addition to a smattering of others. Cross-cultural marriages and relationships are also commonplace, producing numerous Gao of mixed or indeterminate heritage.

History

In 112 N.A., during the Cult Wars that toppled the Phaedran Empire, dissidents were incarcerated on the isolated penal colony of Gao-Din, a gaol from which it was rumored, there was no escape save death. Life in the colony was brutal and unforgiving, but salvation came in 133 N.A. when the forces maintaining the prison were withdrawn, abandoning the site and those incarcerated there, to fend for themselves or die. With this unexpected freedom, the inmates rapidly banded together to survive, and began exploiting the surrounding

jungle, slowly establishing a safe-haven among the walls of their former prison. The Rogue City of Gao was born. Gradually salvaging the shell of a partially-sunk and abandoned Phaedran slave vessel, the Gao set themselves on their first tentative steps along the road of piracy that would become their livelihood. Perhaps the greatest show of Gao solidarity occurred in 267 N.A. when the Imrians attempted to sack Gao, only to be beaten by the island's defenses, swarmed with aqua demons, and subjected to a coordinated sea rogue attack when they tried to retreat. Few Imrians made it home that fateful day.

VISIONS OF GAO

A View from Afar

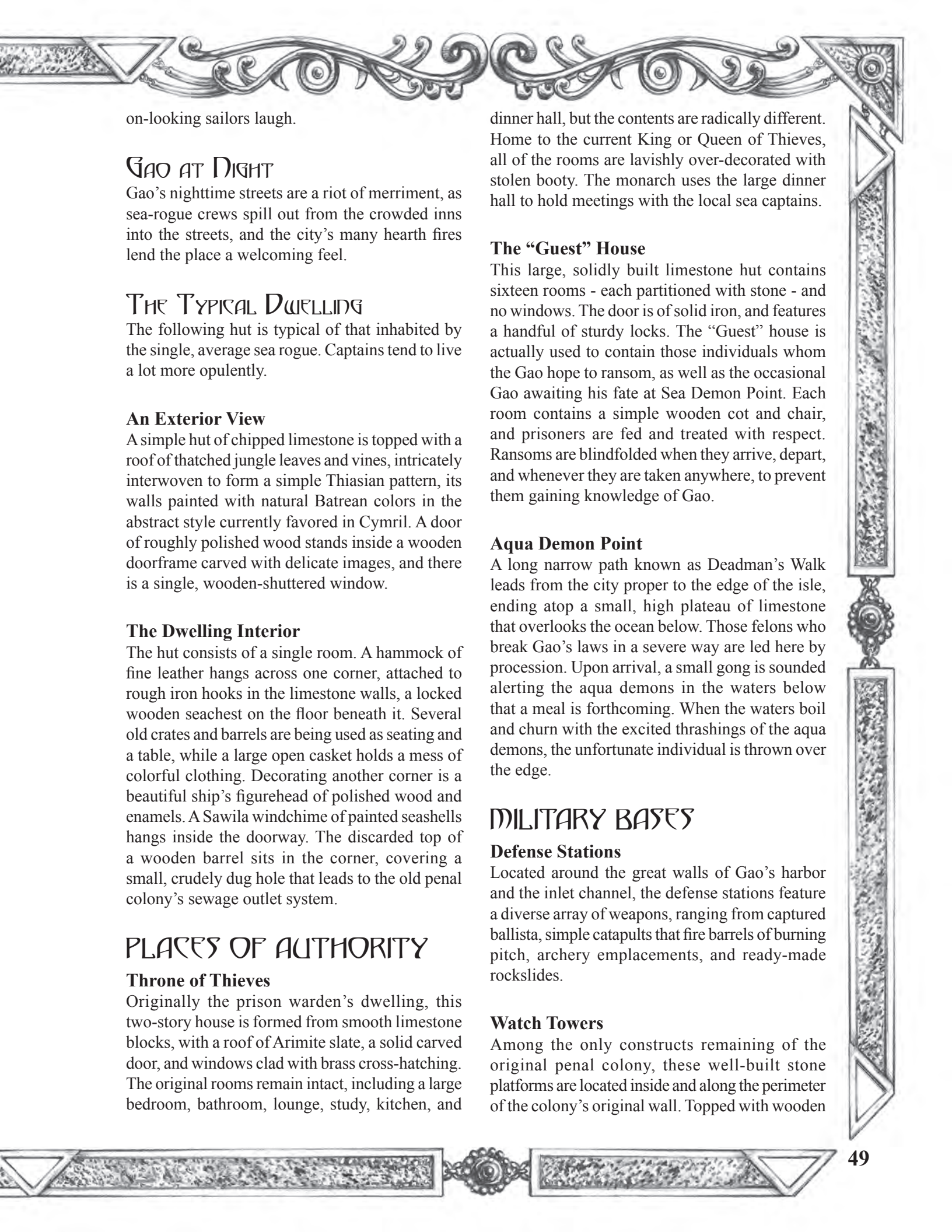
Rising from the crashing azure waves is a small island of white beaches, with a single narrow inlet amid tall, treacherous rock outcrops of limestone. A thick, green mantle of mist-wreathed jungle swathes the isle. Visible above the bank of green are the limestone walls of the Rogue City itself, set atop a high plateau that thrusts up from the surrounding jungle.

At the Gates

Heavy walls of rough limestone, each 20-foot high, bear a large gate of heavy, ironbound timbers featuring a small, iron, sliding panel at eye-level. A stout lookout tower of stone and lashed timbers overlooks the gate, walls, jungle and ocean below, from just inside the gate itself. Cruder, makeshift walls, each a mere 12-foot high, are visible only a short walk away, adjoined to the original walls.

The City Streets

Streets of dirt weave amid a jostle of diverse huts and halls laid in no discernible pattern. Crafted from limestone, jungle timbers and salvaged driftwood, with roofs of thatched jungle vines and leaves, some are plain, while others have carved timbers, and painted walls. The buildings show the influence of varied cultures, including walls painted with Batrean pigments, wooden roofs with carved Mandalan eaves, and wooden beams carved to resemble Phaedran pillars. Children holding sticks play-fence gleefully amid the streets, while



on-looking sailors laugh.

GAO AT NIGHT

Gao's nighttime streets are a riot of merriment, as sea-rogue crews spill out from the crowded inns into the streets, and the city's many hearth fires lend the place a welcoming feel.

THE TYPICAL DWELLING

The following hut is typical of that inhabited by the single, average sea rogue. Captains tend to live a lot more opulently.

An Exterior View

A simple hut of chipped limestone is topped with a roof of thatched jungle leaves and vines, intricately interwoven to form a simple Thiasian pattern, its walls painted with natural Batrean colors in the abstract style currently favored in Cymril. A door of roughly polished wood stands inside a wooden doorframe carved with delicate images, and there is a single, wooden-shuttered window.

The Dwelling Interior

The hut consists of a single room. A hammock of fine leather hangs across one corner, attached to rough iron hooks in the limestone walls, a locked wooden seachest on the floor beneath it. Several old crates and barrels are being used as seating and a table, while a large open casket holds a mess of colorful clothing. Decorating another corner is a beautiful ship's figurehead of polished wood and enamels. A Sawila windchime of painted seashells hangs inside the doorway. The discarded top of a wooden barrel sits in the corner, covering a small, crudely dug hole that leads to the old penal colony's sewage outlet system.

PLACES OF AUTHORITY

Throne of Thieves

Originally the prison warden's dwelling, this two-story house is formed from smooth limestone blocks, with a roof of Arimite slate, a solid carved door, and windows clad with brass cross-hatching. The original rooms remain intact, including a large bedroom, bathroom, lounge, study, kitchen, and

dinner hall, but the contents are radically different. Home to the current King or Queen of Thieves, all of the rooms are lavishly over-decorated with stolen booty. The monarch uses the large dinner hall to hold meetings with the local sea captains.

The "Guest" House

This large, solidly built limestone hut contains sixteen rooms - each partitioned with stone - and no windows. The door is of solid iron, and features a handful of sturdy locks. The "Guest" house is actually used to contain those individuals whom the Gao hope to ransom, as well as the occasional Gao awaiting his fate at Sea Demon Point. Each room contains a simple wooden cot and chair, and prisoners are fed and treated with respect. Ransoms are blindfolded when they arrive, depart, and whenever they are taken anywhere, to prevent them gaining knowledge of Gao.

Aqua Demon Point

A long narrow path known as Deadman's Walk leads from the city proper to the edge of the isle, ending atop a small, high plateau of limestone that overlooks the ocean below. Those felons who break Gao's laws in a severe way are led here by procession. Upon arrival, a small gong is sounded alerting the aqua demons in the waters below that a meal is forthcoming. When the waters boil and churn with the excited thrashings of the aqua demons, the unfortunate individual is thrown over the edge.

MILITARY BASES

Defense Stations

Located around the great walls of Gao's harbor and the inlet channel, the defense stations feature a diverse array of weapons, ranging from captured ballista, simple catapults that fire barrels of burning pitch, archery emplacements, and ready-made rockslides.

Watch Towers

Among the only constructs remaining of the original penal colony, these well-built stone platforms are located inside and along the perimeter of the colony's original wall. Topped with wooden

frameworks and roofs, each provides a clear view of the entire island and the waters beyond.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Training Ship

Actually the ancient hulk of a grounded and secured vessel, the training ship serves as a school for young sea rogues, where they are instructed in the arts of sailing, navigating, traversing rigging, furling and unfurling sails, and fighting aboard ship, by volunteers from among those sea rogues now too old or crippled to go to sea as part of a buccaneer crew. All other education is taught by the child's parents, although those seeking skills and tuition their parents can't provide, will often try and seek a willing tutor to whom they can apprentice themselves.

MARKETS & BAZAARS

The Square

Little more than an area of open ground at the center of Gao, the Square serves as a meeting place where citizens can barter any such plunder, goods, or services as they see fit. The Square is busiest whenever a ship returns with plunder, which its crew trades here after paying the monarch.

TRADERS, ARTISANS & MERCHANTS

Damara's

Dwelling in a small hut with a flat stone roof, Damara is a superb seamstress and tailor, able to adjust existing clothing with ease, stitch stunning embroidery, or create flamboyant new garments out of whatever rags, old apparel, or scraps of cloth she can find. The daughter of a renegade Arimite and a Phaedran Gao, she has a wiry build, dark eyes, black hair, angular features, and dark copper skin. While she appears unarmed, she is unnervingly adept at throwing her sewing needles.

Flint's

The mason nicknamed "Flint" inhabits this

large hut of intricately carved stone. Of mixed Cymrilian/Phaedran parentage, Flint has brown skin, dark green hair, hazel eyes, and an oiled goatee. He is also an accomplished geomancer: a magical field that proves immeasurably useful as an aid to his masonry skills.

Orimar's Forge

Enclosed by walls of woven vines stretched over a wooden framework, this basic forge is operated by Orimar, a powerfully built Zandir blacksmith with savagely cropped hair, and a big smile. Although taciturn when working, he is incredibly gregarious when relaxing, and enjoys a good bout of arm-wrestling. While he can create iron items of good quality, his main talent is in repairing existing items.

Quamaro's

With precisely cut wooden walls, door, and roof, sparingly, but elegantly carved, this large hut stands out as an example of fine carpentry, created by its inhabitant, Quamaro, a Phaedran Gao and carpenter who lives here with Treenya, a decorative wood carver whose skills complement his own. Quamaro makes a variety of wooden goods from old crates, barrels, driftwood, and the occasional piece of new timber, and is also skilled at making natural glues and resins. His work is durable and well made, but would appear monotonously boring if not for Treenya's artistic hand.

Shael's

This thatched hut is decorated with garlands of dyed and woven vines and leaves, and painted with a swirl of greens and blues. Shael, an escaped Batrean paramour dwells here, trading her considerable talents as a maker of natural dyes and paints, as well as a painter both of walls and people. She is nearly always plagued by suitors seeking her favor.

INNS, TAVERNS & RESTAURANTS

The Capering Zaratan

Formed from the converted shell of Gao's original

guard's mess, the Capering Zaratan is a long, vaulted hall of cut limestone blocks and mortar over a framework of stout beams. A great fireplace occupies most of the wall at one end of the hall, and there are numerous kegs, barrels, and crates for patrons to sit upon. A large open firepit is located at the other end of the hall, usually cooking a spit-roast. It is the favored hangout of Jalisha and her crew.

The Ode

The Ode, Gao's finest eatery, is respected for producing some of the tastiest and most inventive dishes in Gao, giving them such colorful appellations as, "Screaming Skalanx Seafood Sausages", etc. Aamatla, the chief chef (a defrocked Aamanian priest) is one of Gao's most temperamental citizens, and is obsessed with spicy food.

DENS OF INIQUITY

Madame Malkin's

This long, broad limestone hall is topped with a roof of old wooden planks carved with lewd comments in Thaecian, but is otherwise unadorned. Despite its dull exterior, it is a combined tavern and brothel beloved of Gao's single sailors. The interior walls are painted with erotic, but tasteful, imagery and the entire hall is decorated with elaborate plunder. Half of the building comprises of a small stage, bar, tables and chairs, while the other half contains a dozen curtained booths where patrons may indulge themselves with a member of the establishment's female or male "service staff".

One of Gao's most eccentric and popular personages, "Madame" Malkin is actually a male Thaecian transvestite, fond of the most elaborate dresses and makeup he can muster. His outrageous wit and humor is the stuff of legends.

TRANSPORTATION

Docks and Harbor

The natural harbor, features enough wooden docking platforms for 30 large, ocean-going vessels (although just as many vessels can anchor within the waters of the dock itself). The harbor

is surrounded by a vast wall of limestone, some 60-foot in height, 20-foot thick, and topped with numerous defense stations. A winding path, wide enough for a single cart, leads up from the harbor to the gates of the rogue city itself.

The Gao Fleet

Despite its small population, Gao can boast an impressive fleet of vessels, including 9 Zandir men o' war, 7 zandir tradesmen, 11 Aamanian frigates, 22 Aamanian merchantmen, one Mangar carrack (taken from a crew that decided to ignore the boundary agreement), and even one Sun-ra-san dragon barque, found adrift with only one crew member (See Sur-Ram below).

SAMPLE NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

Red Rymora - Gao Sea Captain

Rymora is a Gao of obvious Phaedran descent, and refuses to wear any color except scarlet. Among Gao's most proficient swashbucklers, Rymora is handsome, charming, debonair, and entirely too easily swayed by a pretty face. He commands a Zandir man o' war called the "Scarlet Shaitan", and all of his crewmembers wear at least one article of red clothing. His rivalry with Jalisha is lively.

Jalisha - Batrean Sea Captain

Famed captain of the dragon barque, "Riven Scale", the stunning Jalisha is Gao born and bred. So renowned is her beauty that some Zandir captains have surrendered their vessels on sight of her ship, merely to catch a glimpse of her. However, she remains cool to all romantic advances, having found her soul-mate and lover in the female Sawila, Marakiyu.

Sur-Ram - Sun-ra-san First Mate

First mate on the "Riven Scale", Sur-Ram was the only Sun-ra-san found on the dragon barque when it was found adrift by Jalisha. Delirious for many days, he was nursed back to health by Marakiyu (Jalisha's lover) and claims to have no memory of events before he was rescued. Out of gratitude to

Jalisha and Marakiyu he now serves as first mate on the very ship he was found on.

Marakiyu - Sawila Healer and Songsmith

Marakiyu was rescued from Imrian slavers by Jalisha early in the latter's career, and the two fell in love at first sight. Marakiyu now stays in Gao-Din where she is admired for her skill as a healer and singer.

Old Man Kaww - The City Idiot

Kaww has been around as long as anyone in the Rogue City can remember, clad in scrappy rags and hides. He often leers and cackles at passersby, giggling to himself and muttering about "the sunken treasure of Simbar".

Mangral - Mangar Boat-BUILDER

Scarred, tattooed and sinewy, Mangral has mustaches that are so long that he tucks them into his waist-sash.
Cantankerous but

good natured, he is an expert at repairing damage to any sea vessel, and his skills are greatly admired. He turned his back on his native culture, stating that "he never really fit in".

Fillisturm the Chaotic - Sorcerer Supreme

Known for his eccentric, but flamboyant mannerisms, Fillisturm is a Phaedran Gao sea rogue and magician of considerable talent, and peculiar magics. Recognized by the multi-hued patchwork cloak he always wears, Fillisturm is a valued member of Red Rymora's crew.

Paelistro - Pint-sized Swashbuckler


Although merely five years of age, Paelistro is as reckless, daring, and flamboyant as any adult sea rogue, and fancies himself a great swordsman, unbeaten in his stick duels with the other Gao children. With a swagger that would put any bravo to shame, this disheveled and fearless ragamuffin will give anyone who annoys him to swift whack across the shins.



HARAK

Harak is a bleak and desolate land, hemmed in on all sides by mountains and swept by frigid winds from the north. The landscape of Harak is nightmarish: jagged spires of rock jut upwards from the cracked and barren earth, and scattered shards of black iron litter the ground. Here, in this most inhospitable of regions, dwell the fierce warrior clans known as the Harakin.

The Harakin are a hard-hearted people, utterly devoid of mercy or compassion. Ultimate survivalists, they view all other living creatures as prey. Their clans are nomadic, traveling from place to place in search of food and water; both precious commodities in this region. Forced by the circumstances of their existence to endure great hardships,



the folk of Harak have no concept of morality or religion, and are by nature fatalistic and grim. They take what they want, raiding neighboring lands and rival clans.

The Harakin are a gray-skinned race, lean and rugged of build and averaging over six feet in height. They dress in loincloths, cowls, high boots, and heavy gloves, usually made of reptile hide. Both the males and females paint the areas around their eyes with black pigments, giving them a fearsome aspect. When their raids have proved fruitless, they subsist on scorpions, snakes, spiders, and bits of lichen and mosses.

Among the folk of Harak, all are considered warriors. Skills and trades not related to warfare are regarded as useless. Each clan member learns to make his or her own weapons, which are hammered and honed from the numerous fragments of black iron found almost everywhere throughout the region. The Harakin employ a number of unique weapons, including the tarak (four-bladed iron axe), khu (double-bladed dagger), krin (a type of heavy crossbow which fires iron spikes) and the jang (a weapon resembling an edged, iron boomerang). All other skills needed to survive (such as hunting, dressing game, finding water, etc.) are considered warriors' skills; the Harakin word for "survival" and "fight" are one and the same.

Although the Harakin show little trace of civilized behavior, they have domesticated the dractyl, a species of winged reptile native to the sheer cliffs of Harak's coastal regions. The Harakin use these creatures for transport and in battle. Though ugly, mean, and ungainly dractyl require little food and are themselves somewhat edible, factors which hold a certain appeal for their masters. Dractyl are only fair flyers, however, and cannot or will not fly at altitudes in excess of one hundred feet. As a result, the Harakin must often ride them on foot when attempting passage through mountainous regions.

In spite of the shortcomings of their beasts, the warrior clans of Harak are known to range as far as the Quan Empire and the Volcanic Hills in their

depredations. They attack nearby L'Haan with lesser frequency, generally considering passage through the towering peaks of Xanadas to be a profitless endeavor. Able to survive the rigors of their own land, the Harakin have little difficulty tolerating the climates and terrains of other regions, most of which seem pleasant by comparison.

An unusual tale regarding these folk is told in Quan. There, it is said, a group of Mandalan scholars once ventured forth on a mission to Harak. By theorizing, they had deduced that the Harakin were not evil beings, but were simply the products of the harsh and cruel environment of their homeland. It was their intention to convince a few of the Harakin to accompany them on the return trip to Quan, where their scholarly theories might be put to the test.

Upon sighting a small band of the nomads, the wise men threw up their hands and raised their voices in greeting. When the Harakin approached, the scholars gave them gifts of gold, fragrant oils, and precious stones. These the Harakin examined, and then discarded. Without apparent enmity they slew the scholars, divested them of their fur cloaks and boots, cut their mounts into sections, loaded everything on their dractyls, and continued on their way.

IMRIA

Imria is a large island located off the southern coast of Mog, in the Azure Ocean. Its dense jungles, twisting inlets and underwater grottoes teem with such dangerous creatures as Kaliya, crag spiders, and kra (giant, sightless cave eels). Mt. Talus, a large and intermittently active volcano, rises above the southwestern jungle, and sea demons prowl the coastal waters in force. Perhaps the most dangerous inhabitants of the isle, however, are the amphibious humanoids known as the Imrians.

Tall and muscular, the Imrians have sloping shoulders, scaly yellow-green skin, and dark, deep-set eyes. Their hands and feet are webbed and their jaws are lined with a double row of sharp teeth. Having both gills and rudimentary lungs,



the Imrians are capable of living on land and under the sea. They are powerful swimmers, but are somewhat slow and awkward out of the water.

The Imrians are slavers by trade, preying upon the primitive tribes who dwell along the southern coasts of the Talislantan continent and the Crescent Isles. They are among the only Talislantans who do not fear to sail the open sea. The slavers range far and wide in their massive, barge-like coracles, which are constructed from the bones and hide of kra. Smaller vessels of woven reeds, tethered to the coracles until needed, are used for shore raids and to transport bamboo cages filled with captured slaves. The slavers employ a number of different weapons, including capture-poles, throwing nets, pole hooks, and two rather grisly devices: the oc (barbed bolas) and the korreg (a heavy, two-man crossbow; tripod mounted, the korreg works in a way not unlike a harpoon).

Imrians have but a single settlement, the city of

Kragan. Located in a great lagoon situated amidst the central region of Imria, the city consists of hundreds of reed and thatch hovels, each plastered with mud and supported on stilt-like poles. The highest of these structures tower over forty feet above the lagoon, and are occupied by the wealthiest Imrians. Less prosperous Imrians may own hovels which stand just above the water or are partially submerged, according to the tides. Slaves awaiting sale in other lands (and those kept by the Imrians for use as laborers) are generally housed in floating pens moored by heavy lines to the lagoon bottom. The settlement is accessible from the sea by several hidden, winding inlets, each heavily guarded by slave warriors, wild beasts and Imrians.

The Imrians are ruled by a king, who dwells within the highest of Kragan's stilt houses. Among his many responsibilities is the designation of slave shipments to Imria's clients. Quan, Faradun and Zandu vie constantly for Batrean concubines

and Sawila courtesans from the Crescent Isles; Amman, Zandu and Quan compete for Green Men from the Dark Coast, whom they employ as gardeners; other clients contend for Mud People laborers, Ahazu warriors, Mogroth swamp-miners, and Chana Witchmen.

***Note:** The Kang have no desire for the “soft” concubines much in demand by the previous rulers of the Empire, nor do they currently purchase Green Men slaves. They have, on the other hand, increased the number of Ahazu slaves they procure from the Imrians.*

– Jalal Ibn Mahood

The Imrians also traffic in narcotic herbs and exotic beasts, which they supply to the merchant-folk of Faradun.

The customs and culture of the Imrians are generally unappreciated by other humanoid races. Most consider the Imrians’ taste for slugs, worms and leeches (all Imrian delicacies) disgusting, and find it impossible to enjoy a decent meal in their presence. The light coating of slime which covers the body of a healthy Imrian is likewise unappealing to some, especially clothiers and launderers, who dread the appearance of an Imrian in their establishments. As Imrians drink only brine, their presence in the portside taverns of other lands often portends trouble of one sort or another. The Imrians worship no god, any position bearing greater esteem than “King of Imria” being beyond their comprehension, and mock those who do as ignorant savages.

The Imrians, for their part, consider themselves superior to the other Talislantan races. They claim to be “the first race,” from whom the “lesser species” of humanoids are descended. They cite as evidence certain ancient, coral tablets held in their possession for many generations. Retrieved from a sunken crypt by their early ancestors, the Imrians contend that the tablets contain the secret history of their race, dating back over twenty thousand years. Those Talislantan scholars who acknowledge the existence of the Imrian tablets (which are thought

to number into the thousands) believe that they do indeed contain priceless information; not of the Imrians, but of some ancient and advanced civilization which sunk beneath the waves untold ages ago.


***Note:** Before the founding of the Seven Kingdoms, the Imrians ruled a large stretch of Mog and Taz, but when the Thrall tribes united they cast the intruders back into the sea — to this day, the two races hate one another. Several bloody defeats inflicted by the armies of the Seven Kingdoms have also persuaded the Imrians that slave raids into Astar to capture Muses are no longer profitable. Despite such setbacks, the Imrians continue to foster dreams of conquest. They succeeded in subjugating the Isle of Batre in the year 602, and now use it as a breeding ground for slaves, who are sold to the Rajans and Farad.*

- Quen

The magician Crystabal and I suffered an unfortunate encounter with the Imrians following a sojourn to the swamplands of Mog (Editor’s note: See Mog). The two of us were making for the Jhangaran settlement of Tabal when we were ambushed by a band of thirty Imrians, who emerged from the swamps bearing nets, capture-poles and whips.

With searing spells, Crystabal and I laid low a third of their number. Then the slavers were upon us, frothing at the gills and smelling awfully of brine and decaying vegetation. In short order, we were bound, gagged and thrown into reed boats. The Imrians then conveyed us to their slave coracle, which lay at anchor just off the coast of Jhangara.

Once aboard this vessel, Crystabal and I were shackled with iron fetters and shoved into a large bamboo cage positioned on the ship’s deck. The conditions of our interment were abominable: five Green Men, three Jhangaran mercenaries, a pair of squat, six-limbed Mud-People and a great silver-backed Mogroth shared our cell, which had been



constructed without regard for such considerations as comfort or sanitation. The stench of the Mud-People alone was considerable, to say nothing of the odor emitted by the Imrians and their vessel, which reeked after the manner of rotting fish.

Despite our cramped accommodations, Crystabal and I were able to discern much of what was transpiring about us. Other reed boats continued to arrive, bearing more captives: a dispirited Ahazu warrior, a crew of Jhangaran mud-miners, and a mated pair of sivians, muzzled and bound with long lengths of heavy chain. Additional bamboo cages were brought forth from below decks, utilizing a crude, winch-and-crane apparatus. The new arrivals were then incarcerated; the sivians by dint of their ferocity being assigned to a cage separate from the other slaves.

Darkness began to fall, and the Imrians made preparations to depart. A few brought forth lanterns containing scintilla, the luminous eggs of water raknids. Others adjusted the chain harnesses of the three kra employed to tow the slave coracle. One of the Jhangarans was then hauled from an adjacent cage, bound with thongs and lashed to the end of the cable used in conjunction with the Imrians' winch-mechanism. To our horror, the helpless mud-miner was then elevated above the deck, swung to a position some fifteen feet off the ship's prow, and lowered to within inches of the kra's giant, fanged jaws. The blind monstrosities, catching the scent of prey, tugged furiously at their iron chains. Propelled by the activities of the kra, the Imrian coracle pulled out to sea.

To say the least, this situation had done nothing to alter my distaste for waterborne travel. Crystabal, while less prone to hydrophobia, seemed equally pessimistic with regard to our future. Gagged and manacled, there was no way for either of us to effect an escape by the use of our spells. I recalled the sight of the Jhangaran as he dangled in front of the giant kra, and wondered if the Imrians also had some special use for captured wizards and magicians.

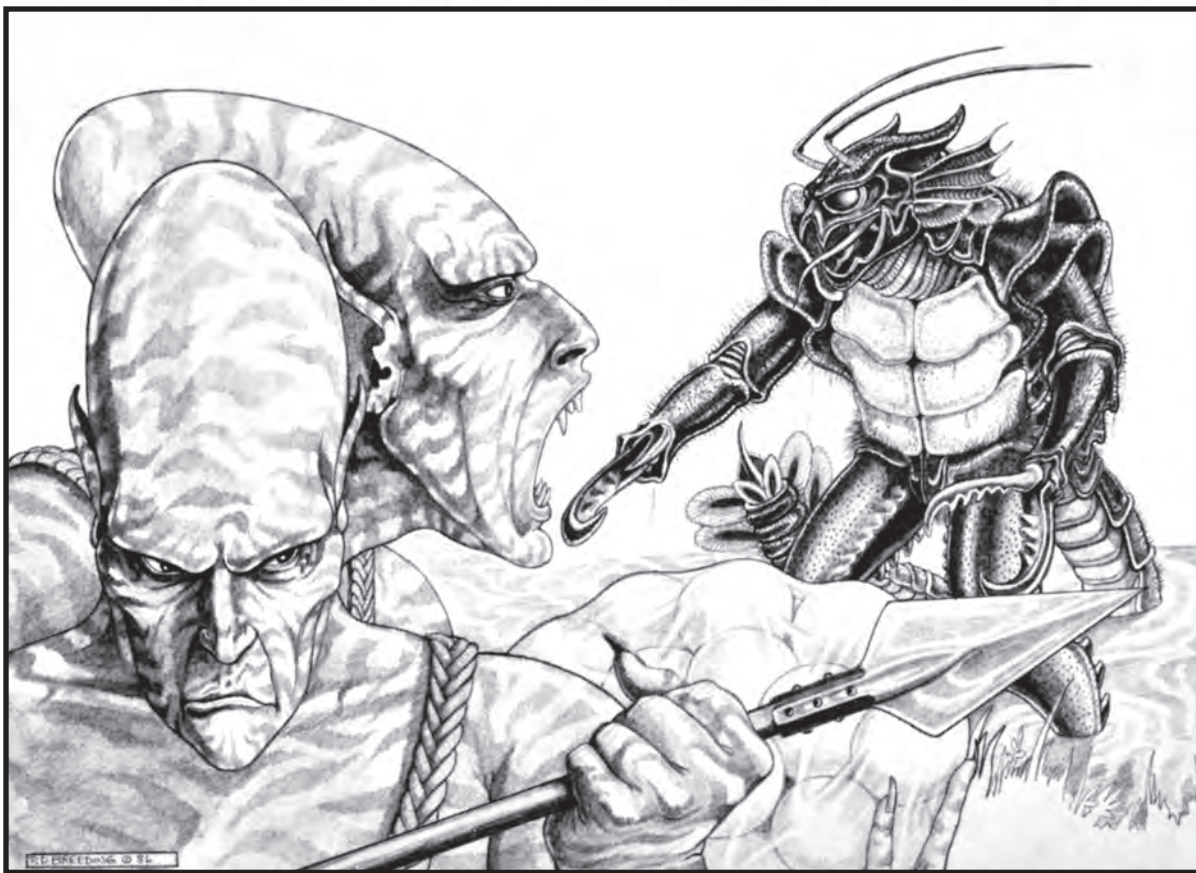
My morbid musings were interrupted by a terrible crashing noise, followed by the sound of splintering

timbers. The vessel lurched violently to starboard, causing bamboo cages to topple over and sending Imrian sentinels sprawling across the deck. Pulling myself from amidst a tangle of writhing bodies, I saw that we had been rammed by another ship. At the helm of the intruders' vessel, a tall figure in dashing raiment stood, poised in melodramatic fashion: Orianos, captain of the Sea-Rogues of Gao-Din.

For the next few moments, all was chaos. Swinging across on ropes, the Sea-Rogues boarded the coracle, shouting lustily and brandishing their swords and daggers. They were met by the hulking Imrians who poured forth from below decks armed with flails and barbed spears. The bamboo cage which held Crystabal and the rest of us suddenly burst asunder. The Mogroth, aroused to anger by the sudden commotion, had ripped the cage apart with its bare hands. The giant creature waded into the ranks of the Imrians, tossing slavers aside as though they were children.

Crystabal and I ran to the other cages, setting free the rest of the slaves, who fell upon their former captors with great relish. The sivians somehow won free, and flew off, each bearing a slaver in its talons. Only the Ahazu, bound by the tenets of its warrior code, refused to move from its place of imprisonment. We left the poor fellow behind and entered the fray, hurling caustic spells upon the Imrians.

Within a short time, the battle was over. The Imrians had all been slaughtered, and a number of slaves had perished in the fight. Among the Sea-Rogues, casualties had been slight; Orianos seemed most concerned with his cloak, which had suffered a tear in one spot. Crystabal and I offered to buy him a new one in Zandu, and a barrel of Zandir wine for his crew. With that, we boarded the Sea-Rogues' vessel and set sail for the Western Lands.



JHANGARA

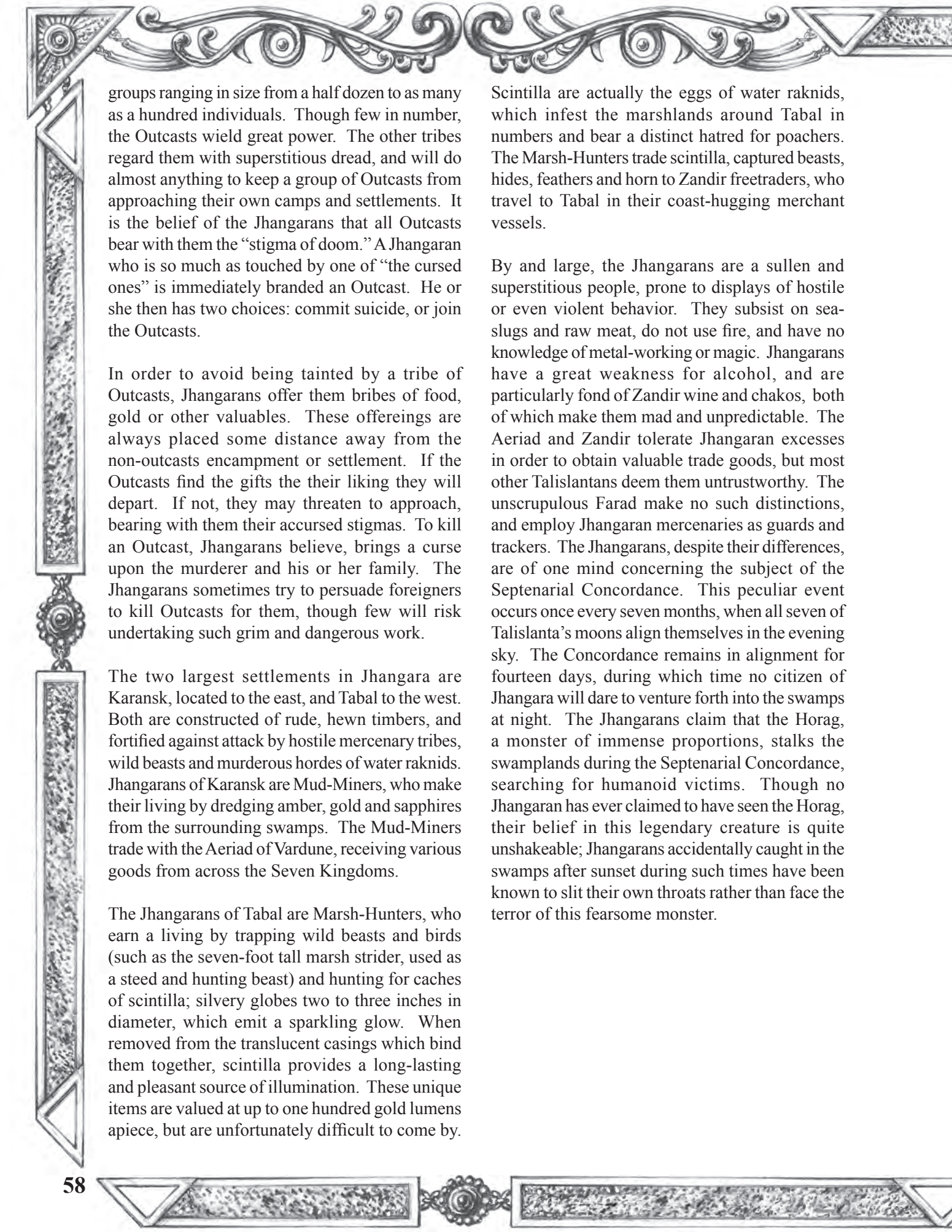
Bordered to the east and west by twin forks of the Axis River, Jhangara is a hot and humid land traveled by few civilized people. Its terrain consists in large part of jungle, murky swamp and bog, becoming progressively more dense and inhospitable towards the southern coastal regions. Here, untamed marshlands predominate, populated by numerous unfriendly species of animals and plants: kra, sivians, stranglevine, violet creeper, and the horrid insectoid predators known as water raknids.

The humanoid denizens of this land are the Jhangarans, a backward race, odd and ungainly in appearance. They have marbled brown and sepia-colored skin, elongated limbs, elliptical craniums and pinched, angular features. Both the males and females are hairless and may attain heights in excess of six and a half feet. The Jhangarans go about bare-footed, wearing only loincloths and bands of coarse cloth wrapped about their arms

and legs. The color of cloth employed denotes the individual's status and vocation. Mud-Miners wear grey, Marsh-Hunters wear green, black is for Mercenaries, and red for Outcasts.

The Jhangarans live in tribal groups, typically comprised of individuals of the same occupation. The Mud-Miners and Marsh-Hunters live in rude settlements, the other clans preferring to move from place to place as circumstances dictate. Rivalries between the various tribes are common, the effects of which may range from prejudicial behavior to all-out warfare. There is no love lost between the Mud-Miners and Marsh-Hunters, who have resented each other for centuries. The Mercenaries will fight for anyone who can afford their services, and sometimes attack the other tribes in order to keep in training. A number of the tribes own crude river craft, which they use to ply their various trades along the length of the mighty Axis River.

Strangest of all the tribes are the Outcasts, who wander the swamps and jungles of Jhangara in



groups ranging in size from a half dozen to as many as a hundred individuals. Though few in number, the Outcasts wield great power. The other tribes regard them with superstitious dread, and will do almost anything to keep a group of Outcasts from approaching their own camps and settlements. It is the belief of the Jhangarans that all Outcasts bear with them the "stigma of doom." A Jhangaran who is so much as touched by one of "the cursed ones" is immediately branded an Outcast. He or she then has two choices: commit suicide, or join the Outcasts.

In order to avoid being tainted by a tribe of Outcasts, Jhangarans offer them bribes of food, gold or other valuables. These offerings are always placed some distance away from the non-outcasts encampment or settlement. If the Outcasts find the gifts to their liking they will depart. If not, they may threaten to approach, bearing with them their accursed stigmas. To kill an Outcast, Jhangarans believe, brings a curse upon the murderer and his or her family. The Jhangarans sometimes try to persuade foreigners to kill Outcasts for them, though few will risk undertaking such grim and dangerous work.

The two largest settlements in Jhangara are Karansk, located to the east, and Tabal to the west. Both are constructed of rude, hewn timbers, and fortified against attack by hostile mercenary tribes, wild beasts and murderous hordes of water raknids. Jhangarans of Karansk are Mud-Miners, who make their living by dredging amber, gold and sapphires from the surrounding swamps. The Mud-Miners trade with the Aeriad of Vardune, receiving various goods from across the Seven Kingdoms.

The Jhangarans of Tabal are Marsh-Hunters, who earn a living by trapping wild beasts and birds (such as the seven-foot tall marsh strider, used as a steed and hunting beast) and hunting for caches of scintilla; silvery globes two to three inches in diameter, which emit a sparkling glow. When removed from the translucent casings which bind them together, scintilla provides a long-lasting and pleasant source of illumination. These unique items are valued at up to one hundred gold lumens apiece, but are unfortunately difficult to come by.

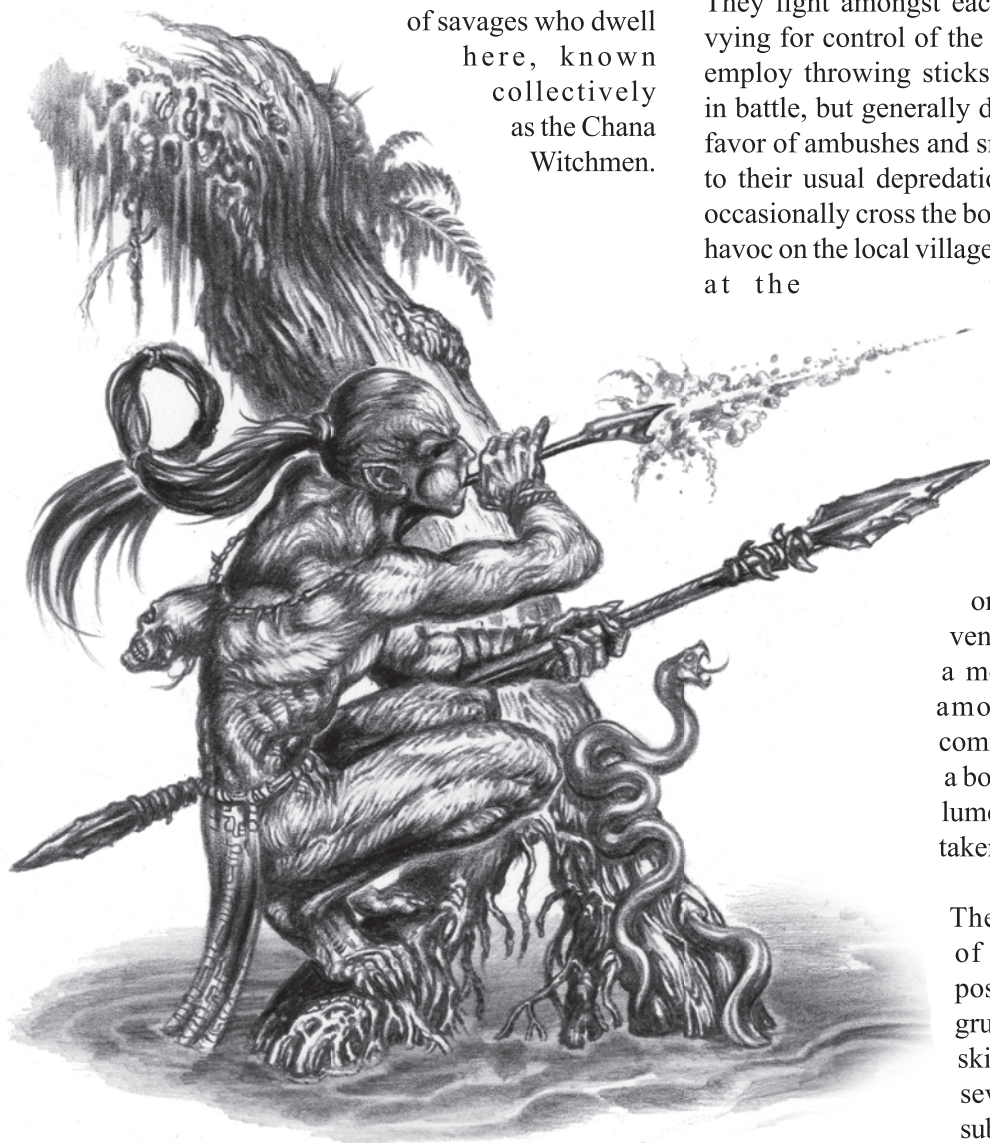
Scintilla are actually the eggs of water raknids, which infest the marshlands around Tabal in numbers and bear a distinct hatred for poachers. The Marsh-Hunters trade scintilla, captured beasts, hides, feathers and horn to Zandir freetraders, who travel to Tabal in their coast-hugging merchant vessels.

By and large, the Jhangarans are a sullen and superstitious people, prone to displays of hostile or even violent behavior. They subsist on sea-slugs and raw meat, do not use fire, and have no knowledge of metal-working or magic. Jhangarans have a great weakness for alcohol, and are particularly fond of Zandir wine and chakos, both of which make them mad and unpredictable. The Aeriad and Zandir tolerate Jhangaran excesses in order to obtain valuable trade goods, but most other Talislantans deem them untrustworthy. The unscrupulous Farad make no such distinctions, and employ Jhangaran mercenaries as guards and trackers. The Jhangarans, despite their differences, are of one mind concerning the subject of the Septenarial Concordance. This peculiar event occurs once every seven months, when all seven of Talislanta's moons align themselves in the evening sky. The Concordance remains in alignment for fourteen days, during which time no citizen of Jhangara will dare to venture forth into the swamps at night. The Jhangarans claim that the Horag, a monster of immense proportions, stalks the swamplands during the Septenarial Concordance, searching for humanoid victims. Though no Jhangaran has ever claimed to have seen the Horag, their belief in this legendary creature is quite unshakeable; Jhangarans accidentally caught in the swamps after sunset during such times have been known to slit their own throats rather than face the terror of this fearsome monster.

THE JUNGLES OF CHANA

The Jungles of Chana occupy a portion of the southeastern coast of Talislanta, from Faradun to the borders of the Quan Empire. To the west, the jungles meld into rain forest, rising upwards into the Jade Mountains. The climate in this region is hot, wet, and unbearably humid; ideal conditions for Chana's many varieties of tropical plants and trees, which can literally spring up overnight after a drenching rain. Virulent species of animals and insects likewise find the jungles to their liking, making travel in this region a dismal proposition.

Worse still are the fierce tribes of savages who dwell here, known collectively as the Chana Witchmen.



The Witchmen are a people of dark and sinister repute, whose tastes for such pastimes as head hunting and cannibalism have endeared them to few other races. A reliance upon various narcotic herbs contributes heavily to the unhealthy appearance of these folk, who are tall and cadaverous in stature, with bilious green skin. The Witchmen do their utmost to appear fearsome, filing their teeth to sharpened points, decorating their glowering visages with occult symbols, and wearing the shrunk heads of their adversaries on cords slung about the neck. It is customary for these folk to wear their hair in a single topknot, lacquered and braided with leather thongs or sinew.

The Witchmen tribes are warlike in the extreme. They fight amongst each other constantly, each vying for control of the other's territories. They employ throwing sticks, blow-guns, and spears in battle, but generally disdain frontal assaults in favor of ambushes and sneak attacks. In addition to their usual depredations, bands of Witchmen occasionally cross the border into Quan, wreaking havoc on the local villages. Kang troops, stationed at the

nearby Quan outpost of Vishana periodically launch raids into the jungles in retaliation for these assaults.

The Kang have a particular loathing for such duty, which they regard as being on a par with hunting for venomous snakes. To instill a more enthusiastic outlook among the troops, Kang commanders frequently offer a bounty of one hundred gold lumens for each Chana head taken on such forays.

The Chana lack any form of civilized virtues, but possess certain undeniably gruesome talents. They are skilled in the concocting of several strange and unique substances, such as devilroot



and kesh. The former is an herb poison which can be made to varying toxicity, and may be prepared in powdered or resinous form. Kesh is a pungent liquid derived from the root of the jabutu, a plant found only in the Jade Mountains. It is notable for its profound narcotic and magical properties, and is used extensively in Chana black magic rituals.

The Chana have little talent for domesticating wild beasts, but have learned how to charm the poisonous serpents known as death's head vipers. The Witchmen call these foot-long snakes "wrist vipers" and wear them like deadly, living bracelets. The serpents are trained to attack on command, and have many practical uses.

Perhaps the most infamous of the Witchmen's talents is their reputed ability to steal souls, which they imprison in enchanted stones. These devices, called soulstones, are used to create jujus: mindless zombies controlled through the use of a graven image. Shrunk head fetishes, used to communicate with the lower spirit realms, are also popular. The exact process by which jujus and shrunk head fetishes are made is sufficiently revolting to warrant omission from this text.

Chana's jungles are known to harbor an abundance of riches, including costly herbs, precious stones and exotic animals. The Imrians raid the coastal regions on a regular basis, taking Witchmen slaves; there is a market for Chana witch doctors in Faradun, where they are employed in the narcotics and contraband trades. Magical herbs and necromantic paraphernalia are additional lures to the Imrians. Not surprisingly, more than a few Witchmen bear the shrunk and scaly-skinned heads of such souvenir hunters on their belts. however.

The Jade Mountains of Chana are also rich in natural resources, including black diamonds, moonstones, k'tallah, lotus, devilroot, and a tropical variety of cleric's cowl. The area is populated by sivians and other terrible creatures, yet is home to one of the most unusual humanoid tribes on the continent, known as the Manra.

The Manra resemble the Witchmen in physical stature, but exhibit none of the frightful or unhealthy characteristics associated with those hostile peoples. They possess the unique ability to assume the forms of other living things, such as

***Note:** The Chana Witchmen have been poised for a major war with the Kang for several seasons. In my travels through the southern Kang Empire, it was readily apparent that the Kang are preparing for a major push into the jungles of the Witchmen. Most Kang in the region do not relish the coming battle as they know the Witchmen's usual tactics and are loathe to fight a guerilla war against such a dishonorable enemy.*

- Jalal Ibn Mahood

wild beasts and plants. A derivative of the jabutu plant, prepared in some secret manner, is believed to be the source of the Manra's shape-changing abilities. Their tribes are generally peaceful in nature, though deviant Manra clans are known to exist. Both types bear considerable resentment for the Witchmen tribes, their rivals for the region's limited supply of jabutu plant.

While traveling at the behest of the Emperor of Quan (Editor's note: See Quan), I once made the grievous error of venturing too near the territories of the Chana Witchmen, a misstep which nearly brought a premature ending to my career. With me at the time were a contingent of crimson-skinned Kang warriors and Zen, a beautiful Mandalan Savant enslaved by the Quan and assigned to guide our party. I had just finished compiling a series of notes on the jabutu plant when several of the Kang's great, lizard-like Striders suddenly became irritable, clawing the ground and emitting loud, squawking sounds. The Kang, perplexed by the behavior of their mounts, sought to quiet the beasts, without success.

Not a moment later, the source of the striders' agitation became all too apparent. From the edge of the jungle a howling band of Witchmen sprang forth, forty strong and armed with spears and blowguns. Poison darts buzzed like angry wasps among us, Kang warriors and striders alike. Though the Kang fought with their usual ferocity, our attackers enjoyed the twin advantages of surprise and superior numbers. They quickly overran our position, a blow to the head rendering me unconscious while the battle still raged.

I awoke suspended by ropes above a great cauldron of roiling liquid, which filled the air about me with acrid vapors. A cursory glance from side to side put my situation in perspective: darkness hung over the jungle, the only source of illumination being the flames which stroked the cauldron beneath my feet. Seated around the fire, an entire tribe of Witchmen watched with grim fascination as two of their number prepared to lower me into the vat.

Suddenly, a spectral form stepped forward from the darkness, its body emitting a weird incandescence. The Witchmen were at once seized with fear, and fled in mindless terror into the depths of the jungle. The phantasm turned towards me and, to my surprise, uttered a laugh; it was Zen, my Mandalan guide. Anticipating the result of our battle with the Witchmen, she had hidden in jungle, and so eluded capture. When she saw that I had been taken alive, Zen followed at a safe distance and waited for nightfall. She then rubbed her face, hands and garments with a type of phosphorescent fungi native to the region. This gave her the semblance of a radiant spirit-form, an appearance which Zen believed would frighten the Witchmen, who have a superstitious dread of benevolent spirits.

Without further delay, Zen freed me from my bonds and lowered me to the ground. No longer under the supervision of the Kang guards, we elected to head west towards Carantheum, where Zen would no longer be a slave to the Quan Empire.

KHAZAD

Khazad is a strange and largely unknown realm located at the furthest north western reaches of Talislanta. Practically inaccessible to all but the most determined and knowledgeable travelers, its terrain is quite foreboding. A line of precipitous cliffs runs the length of its western coast, and a ridge of mountains extends along its eastern borders. To the north lie fields of ice and snow; beyond this is the Midnight Sea, where sailors fear to go. The waters of the Gulf of Silvanus, rock-strewn and perilous, deny easy access from the southeast.

As a result of these impediments to travel, much of what is known of Khazad is based upon the accounts of the wandering Sarista tribes and the few hardy adventurers who have risked journeying to this isolated area. According to their accounts, the interior of Khazad is less than inviting. Patches of bleached and barren gall oak stand like skeletons, silhouetted against a dreary, purple and grey sky. Broken and irregular lines of hills dot the landscape, interspersed with moors, quagmires, and stagnant ponds. The air is heavy with the smell of moldering vegetation, and exudes an unsettling, ancient quality.

Scattered throughout the country are ruins, evidently of some long-forgotten civilization. Though a few have been plundered of their hidden secrets, others remain largely unexplored. Far to the north are vast burial grounds, denoted by row upon row of age-worn stone markers. Less frequently encountered are mausoleums of pitted stone, engraved with arcane symbols of obscure

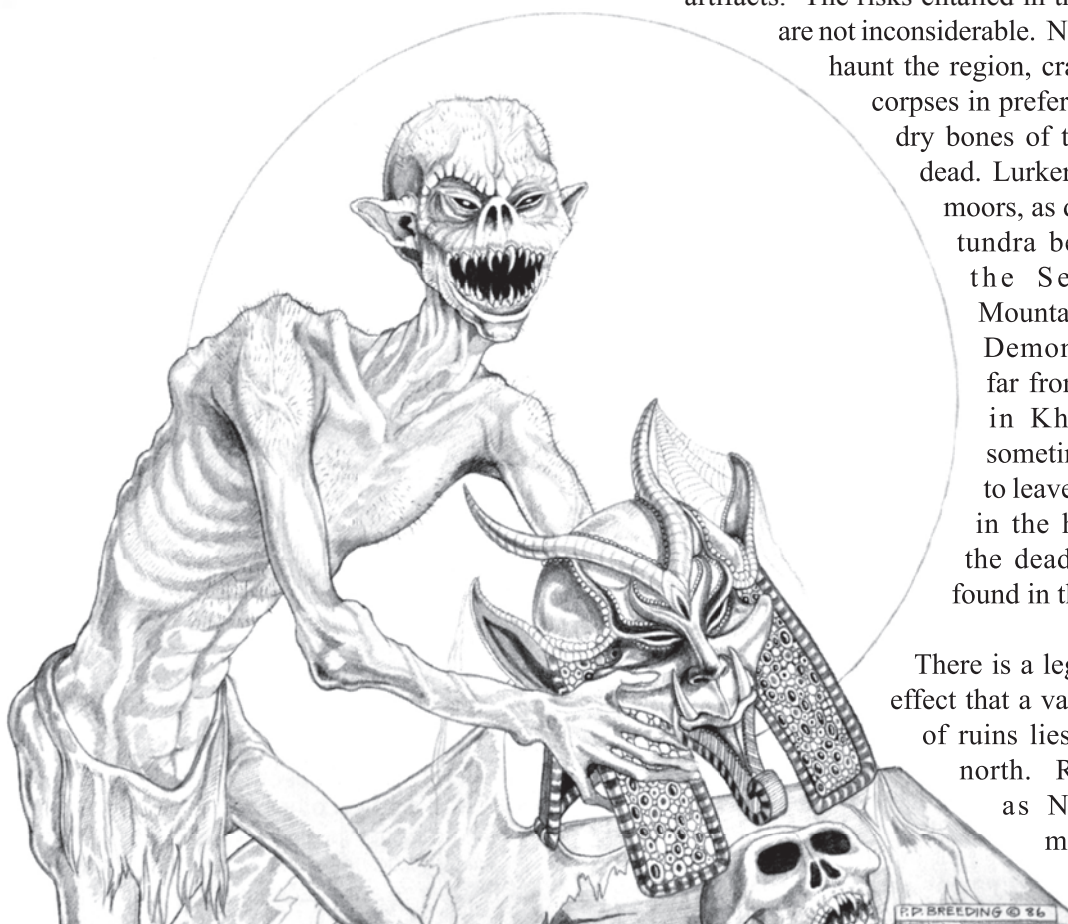
origin. Humanoid remains, entombed in massive sarcophagi of strange design, have been found in some of these crypts. Apparently individuals of some importance, these men and women of Khazad were buried wearing gold funerary masks of frightening aspect. In the less elaborate tombs and graves, similar masks of silver, copper, tin, and lead have been unearthed. Though the purpose of these artifacts is unclear, some scholars believe the masks were intended to ward demons or evil spirits from the bodies of the deceased.

The value of the metal used in the making of these masks is believed to have been a measure of the wearer's social status or rank.

Also favored are the brass urns found in the tombs of this region. Sealed with paraffin, these devices were used to imprison bottle-imps, and to safe keep the corpse-dust of departed wizards. Prized by curio collectors and Necromancers alike, these relics bring high prices in some places. Accordingly, the Sarista occasionally venture into Khazad for the express purpose of acquiring such artifacts. The risks entailed in this practice

are not inconsiderable. Necrophages haunt the region, craving fresh corpses in preference to the dry bones of the Khazad dead. Lurkers prowl the moors, as do packs of tundra beasts from the Serpentine Mountains. Wind Demons, though far from common in Khazad, are sometimes known to leave their larva in the hollows of the dead gall oaks found in this area.

There is a legend to the effect that a vast complex of ruins lies far to the north. Referred to as Necron on many ancient maps, the

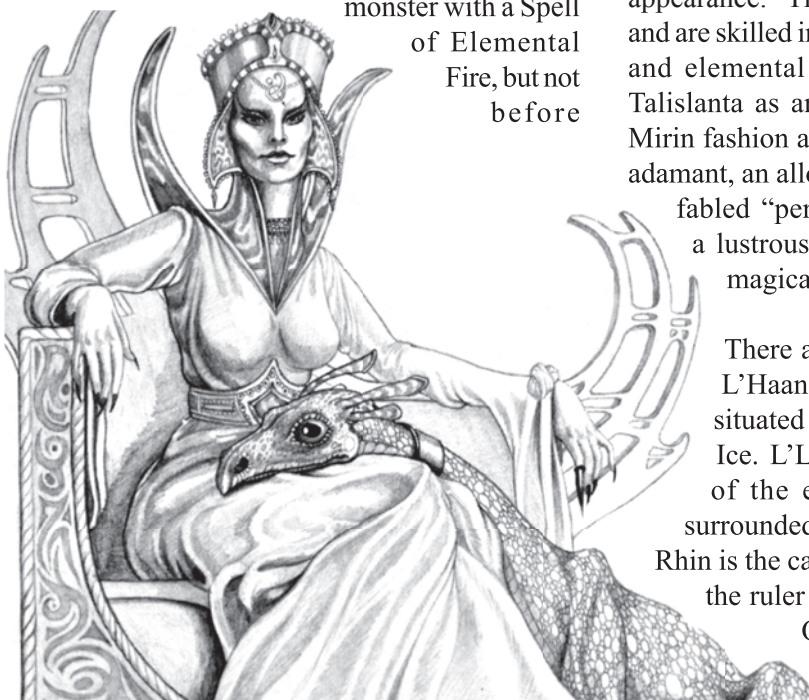


Sarista call it the “City of the Dead.” Here, it is believed, are buried the mummified remains of an entire city’s population. The Sarista claim that the city is cursed, and say that it is death to enter it. Others believe that the Sarista tell such tales to frighten away would-be grave robbers from their own private plundering grounds.

The magician Crystabal and I were intent on finding this lost city, and so made preparations to travel to Khazad. Our plans were hampered when it became apparent that we could find no Zandir or Sarista guide willing to undertake such a mission. Fearing that another delay would force postponement of the trip due to the spring rains, we decided to go it alone. We purchased the necessary supplies in the Zandir capital of Zanth and were on our way.

All went reasonably well until we reached the northern borders of Silvanus. Here, we had thought to forge the Necros River and follow an old Sarista trail into the Serpentine Mountains. An early thaw unexpectedly caused the river to overflow its banks, necessitating a change in strategy. We headed south, hoping to cross the Necros by means of a rope and wood slat bridge notated on Crystabal’s map. Along the way, we were attacked by an exomorph. Crystabal dispatched the

monster with a Spell of Elemental Fire, but not before



one of our steeds had been slain


At this point, I suggested that we temporarily abandon the quest and return to Zandu. Crystabal, an adventurous and hot-headed youth, would hear none of it. We finally reached the bridge, only to find that it had been washed out. Stopping to make camp and discuss our situation, I discovered that a band of mischievous woodwhisks had absconded with the remainder of our food. Crystabal and I exchanged meaningful glances, then packed up our gear and rode off in the direction of Zandu. A heavy rain commenced, signaling the premature onset of spring.

L’HAAN

L’Haan is a land of vast snow fields, glittering ice peaks, and frozen lakes. Located in the nethermost reaches of eastern Talislanta, the region is predominantly wilderness, populated by tundra beasts and great herds of Snowmane and wooly ogriphant. Along the shores of the Sea of Ice live the only civilized folk native to L’Haan: the blue-skinned humanoids known as the Mirin.

The Mirin are a noble race, tall and statuesque in appearance. They live in crystalline ice castles, and are skilled in the arts of enchantment, alchemy, and elemental magic. Renowned throughout Talislanta as artificers of the highest order, the Mirin fashion armor weapons and implements of adamant, an alloy of silver and blue diamond, the fabled “permanent ice” of legend; actually, a lustrous gemstone possessing significant magical properties.

There are two large Mirin settlements in L’Haan: the twin cities of Rhin and L’Lal, situated on opposite shores of the Sea of Ice. L’Lal, located closest to the territories of the evil Ice Giants of Narandu, is surrounded by walls over forty feet in height. Rhin is the capital of L’Haan, and it is here that the ruler of the Mirin, known as the Snow Queen, resides. A figure of some mystery to outsiders, the Snow



Queen is said to be a white witch of surpassing ability. Travel between the two cities is mainly by ice schooner, majestic sail-driven vessels which glide across the Sea of Ice on runners made of gleaming adamant.

The Mirin army, much-hardened by long campaigns against the Ice Giants of Narandu, the Harakin, and the Frost Demons of the Opal Mountains, is considered by some to be the finest fighting force on the continent. Equipped with light chain mail, swords, shields, and spears of adamant, the Mirin present a formidable challenge to intruders venturing into their territories. Mirin war sleds, drawn by teams of Snowmanes, allow swift response to threats from all across the realm.

A deeply religious people, the Mirin revere Borean, God of the cold North Wind. The white witches and warlocks of Borean do not build temples in his name, but erect altars on the snowy steppes around L'Lal and Rhin. It is only in such open and natural surroundings, they say, that one can feel the true presence of the God of the North Wind.

The Mirin rarely venture beyond their own borders, as they are incapable of tolerating any but the coldest climes. Druas from the Maze-City of Altan sometimes come here, as does at least one tribe of hardy and extremely determined Djaffir merchants. Despite generous offers from many foreign lands, the Mirin refuse to trade any but the smallest quantities of blue diamond or adamant, substances which they consider vital to the defense of their land.

Nevertheless, adventurers and fortune seekers have long risked the perils of the Opal Mountains in the hope of finding deposits of blue diamond. The most common route, through the Volcanic Hills and the Valley of Mist, is recommended only to those whose sense of adventure is matched by equal measures of courage and/or insensate recklessness. Saurans and raknids, a hideous cross-breed of scorpion and demon, roam the Volcanic Hills, while vorls (vile creatures composed of insubstantial vapor) haunt the Valley of Mist. Those fortunate enough to reach the Opal Mountains may expect to be accosted by Frost

Demons, who are attracted by the body heat given off by warm-blooded creatures.

The Druas known to me as Shadowmoon (Editor's note: See Tamaranth) was a friend of the blue-skinned Mirin. By means of a trail known only to his people, we journeyed to L'Haan; I, hoping to acquire a small quantity of blue diamond, and he in response to some inner voice, the nature or intent of which Shadowmoon did not deign to discuss.

Taking care to avoid the less-friendly denizens of this frozen land, we rode on swift snowmanes towards the Ice City of L'Lal. Shadowmoon spoke not a word throughout the course of our trip, which was not unusual for one of his race, though I felt that the quality of his silence now bore some additional meaning. Several miles from L'Lal we were met by a platoon of twenty Mirin scouts clad in gleaming adamant, whose duty it was to patrol the perimeters of the Crystal City. Here, Shadowmoon learned that Ardan, a Mirin to whom he had been bound in friendship had died of wounds sustained in battle with the Ice Giants of Narandu.

Without show of outward emotion, the Druas accompanied the scouts to the gravesite of his friend, who had been interred beneath the frozen tundra. He stood there in silence while I went on to L'Lal, where I carried out my business with a heavy heart, trading six fine moonstones for a single, flawless blue diamond. On the following day I returned to find Shadowmoon as I had left him, still maintaining his lonely vigil. After a time, the Druas sat astride his snowmane, and we departed.

MOG

Mog is a vast swampland cut by countless small tributaries of the Axis River. Travel on foot through this region is quite impractical, and recommended only to those who possess an unreasoning fondness for wading in knee-deep, murky waters. Explorers who venture into this realm generally do so in flat-bottomed boats, the gnarly roots of giant bombo trees serving as suitable anchorage for this type of craft.

The swamps of Mog teem with a variety of unusual plant and animal species. Morphiuss, a parasitic plant whose blossoms emit sleep-inducing fragrance, grows among the branches of certain trees, as does serpentvine, an obnoxious, biting species of plant which subsists on small birds and reptiles. Deadman, a plant whose pale, white leaves exude a deadly contact poison, is of use deterring woodwhisks and flits, both of which are

a great nuisance to travelers. K'tallah plant and black lotus, two herbs which possess extreme hallucinogenic and mind-altering properties, are highly sought after by dealers of contraband goods. The region's primary resource is amber, however, which is a lure to free traders, prospectors and opportunists from across the Western Lands and the Seven Kingdoms.

Of intelligent species native to this region, the Mogroth are most common. Huge, sloth-like humanoids, the Mogroth live in rude huts erected in the branches of large mung-berry trees. They subsist on the leaves and fruit of these trees, which are remarkably bitter and shunned by other creatures. The Mogroth, on the other hand, claim that only those of refined tastes are capable of appreciating the mung's distinct savor. Though they are notoriously lazy and slow-moving, Mogroth occasionally dredge the swamps for bits of gold and amber, both of which are found here



in some quantities. These they trade to foreigners in return for strong drink, which they favor greatly. The more ambitious of these creatures will sometimes travel to Jhangara or the Seven Kingdoms, bearing sacks of gold and amber. Being somewhat dull-witted, the Mogroth seldom strike a hard bargain for their wares, a fact which draws unscrupulous and conniving merchants to them like flies to honey.

By far the most unusual creature to inhabit the swamps of Mog is the rare and exotic gold beetle. These strange insects, which measure from up to four inches in length, feed on tiny bits of gold washed down the tributaries of the Axis River. In time, their wings and carapaces begin to take on a golden luster. By adulthood, the beetle's entire body is fully transmuted to gold of the purest sort.

Gold beetles are highly treasured as pets by wealthy Zandir, Thaecians, and especially the Quan. Fine specimens may bring as much two thousand gold lumens each, such is their rare beauty. Gold beetles are fragile creatures, however, and must be handled with extreme care. Dead, they are worth no more than a few silver pieces. These rare insects are solitary in nature, and tend to nest amidst such noxious plants as deadman and morphiuss, neither of which have any effect on gold beetles.

The Amber Wasp, a pestiferous version of the gold beetle, also inhabits the swamplands of Mog. As its sting is quite painful, it is understandably sought after with considerably less vigor than its more benign counterpart. Of interest to adventurers will be the news that giant leeches, cave bats, and lurkers (swamp demons) are also found here.

In all candor, slogging through the swamps of Mog had not been high on my list of priorities until I visited Cymril, capital of the Seven Kingdoms. There, a Kasmir money lender offered me a sizeable sum of gold to travel to Mog and return with a shipment of costly herbs. My initial reaction was one of disinterest. A severe shortage of funds caused me to reconsider, however, and I accepted the assignment.

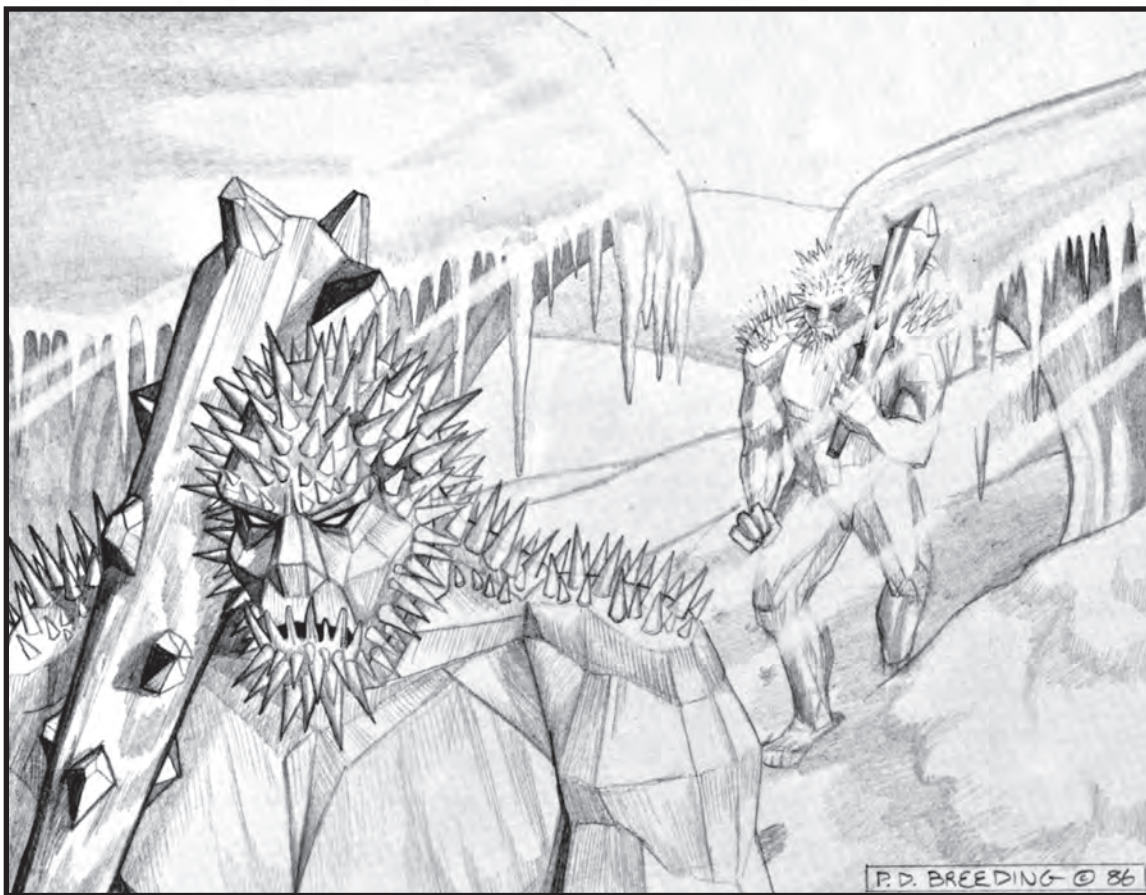
My first step in preparing for the journey was to hire a mercenary Thrall to act as guide. I would advise any considering a trip to Mog to do the same. While these muscular and war-loving folk have little skill at wood-lore, they know well the swamps of this region and are handy with a blade. Also with us was Crystabal, a young magician whom I'd met while in Cymril.

We took one of the seven roads from Cymril to Taz, and then followed a series of trails through the jungle. Forging the Axis River, we entered Mog. Our Thrall guide, who called himself Ramm, proved invaluable, particularly during a brief but harrowing encounter with a tentacled lurker. About five miles into the swamp, we met up with a group of three Mogroth. None of us could believe the size and bulk of these creatures, who dwarfed even the mighty Ramm. As our employer had instructed us, we gave the Mogroth twelve casks of Arimite liquor. In return, they handed over to us a quantity of black lotus, tantalus and k'tallah worth twenty times what we had given them. Crystabal and I rued the inequity of this exchange, which we felt took unfair advantage of the Mogroth. We paid the Mogroth each an additional sum of gold and headed instead towards Jhangara, leaving the Kasmir to ponder the wages of sin.

NARANDU

Narandu is an immense and frozen wasteland which stretches across much of the far northern regions of Talislanta. Here, jagged mountains of ice pierce the bleak tundra, and frigid winds howl through chasms ringed with hoarfrost. Only the hardest creatures can survive in this torturous region, which is home to the monstrous beings known as the Ice Giants.

These creatures are aptly named indeed, for their bodies are composed entirely of solid ice. They are frightening to behold, standing well over ten feet in height and weighing as much as one ton. Spiky protrusions of ice cover their bodies, and their hands and feet are clawed. Although they are bestial and lack great intelligence, the Ice Giants



are formidable foes. Their very bodies emanate a piercing cold, so much so that large groups of Ice Giants can effectively lower temperatures in a wide-radius area.

By advancing further and further south each year the Ice Giants have slowly extended their territories, converting temperate lands to bleak tundra by establishing settlements in these areas. The avian Gryphs of Tamaranth have long warned of these intrusions, though generally to little avail. Even scholars who acknowledge the veracity of the Gryphs' claims contend that the Ice Giants' southern progress is so gradual as to warrant little concern; most estimate the rate of advancement at less than one half foot per year. Despite the fact that the Ice Giants advance along nearly a thousand mile front, these scholars claim that the loss of land in real terms is so minimal as to be insignificant.

The Ice Giants are ruled by a mysterious being known only as the Ice King. Unlike his brutish

subjects, who know nothing of magic, the Ice King is a powerful warlock. His sworn enemy is the Snow Queen of L'Haan, who has long opposed the Ice King's plans of conquest. Fierce battles, pitting the Ice King's legions against the Snow Queen's armies of Mirin, have raged along the borders of L'Haan for many centuries.

The land of Narandu is rich in deposits of blue diamond, the magical substance known as "permanent ice." The Ice Giants lack the knowledge of how to utilize the magical properties of these gemstones, but mine them nonetheless for use in making crude weapons. War clubs embedded with uncut blue diamonds are used in battle to some effect by many of the Ice Giants.

The Ice Giants do not erect permanent structures of any kind, though they are known to carve tunnels and caverns in the sides of glaciers or mountains of ice. In these places are stored blue diamonds, articles obtained in battle with the Mirin, and the frozen carcasses of such creatures as muskronts,

On the subject of Narandu, I have this to say; my people have expended much effort to understand the nature of the Ice Giants. Long have we striven to resist their southern progress into Tamaranth, and in that time we learned that our foes possess something of the nature of demons; they are formed of anti-elemental forces, and when they perish they leave behind a demonic heartstone. However, oddities remained to be explained.

The heartstone of an Ice Giant is a blue diamond, rather than a black diamond as is true for all other demons. Also, Ice Giants do not behave as other demons, for while they are just as destructive and violent as their kin, they also work together toward common goals and function as a unified army against those who oppose them.

If they are truly demons then there must be a progenitor; a frozen demonlord, somewhere in the northlands. Such a demonlord would be vast in size and incapable of movement, a mountain of ice from which the Ice Giants are "born". This, we believe, is the entity known as the Ice King.

Perhaps the final piece to the puzzle came from an elder of thirteen incarnations, she who is sometimes called Stonespeaker. She has spent ages at the rim of the Black Pit of Narandu, listening to the long memories of the stones. She has learned a great deal about the Black Pit; it was formed during the event you call the Great Disaster, and it is more than a mere crack in the ground. The very structure of reality is cracked in that place, and the deepest crevices of the Pit reach other worlds - worlds of hellish nature, perhaps even the Demonrealms themselves.

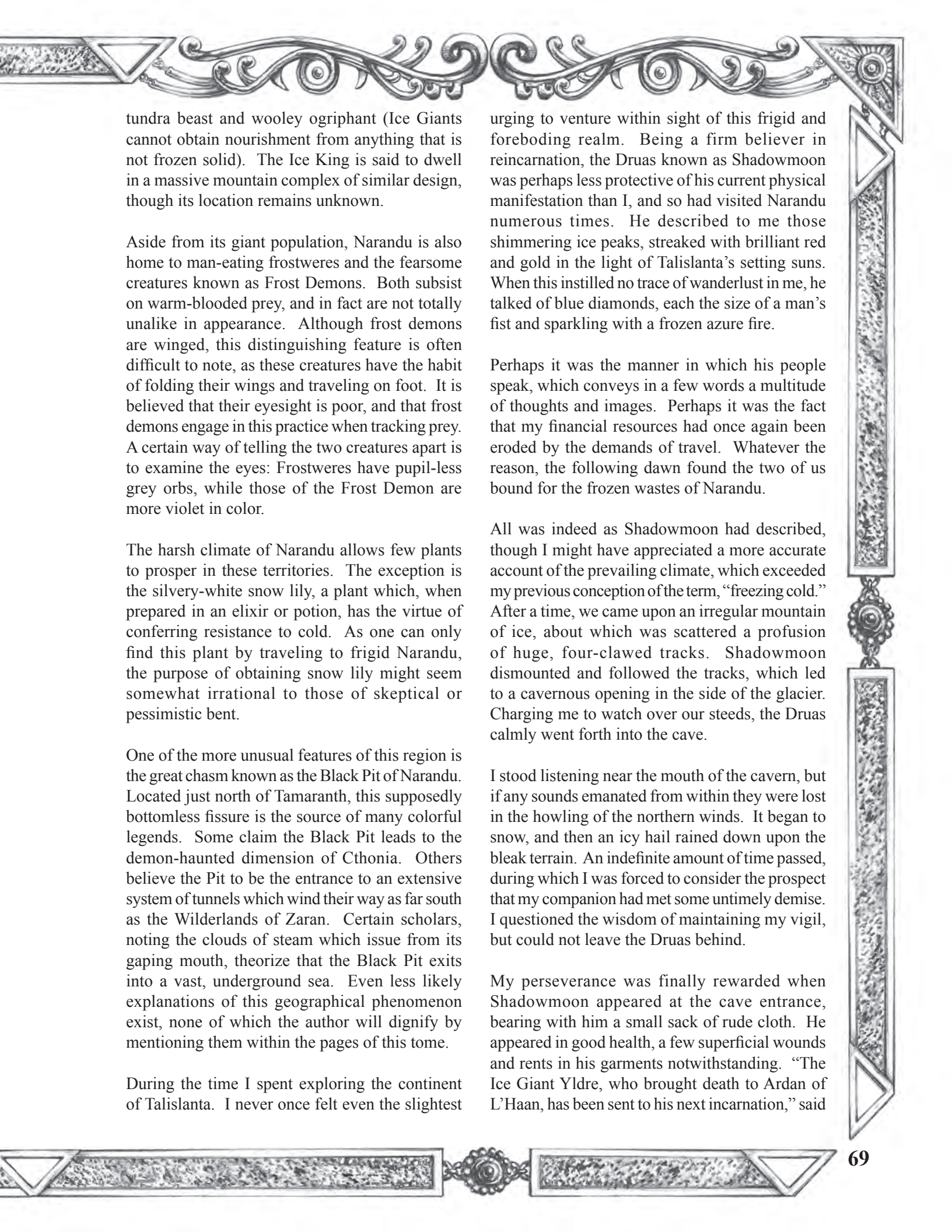
One of these worlds is Gelidane, so named by the Mirin explorers who discovered the entrance. Stonespeaker was their guide through the Black Pit, though she was unable to bear the frigid temperatures as they neared the planar rift itself. The few Mirin who returned told of a land of absolute cold, such that their weapons turned to ice and their blood froze in their veins. Stonespeaker nursed the survivors as best she could, but they passed to their next incarnation soon after.

From what they told her, and from an examination of their gear, she deduced that the very nature of Gelidane is such that the coldness there is more than a mere physical chill, but a metaphysical embodiment of the very concept of cold. Anything exposed to that environment would be more than simply frozen, it would be altered on a basic level.

From what we have learned from Stonespeaker, we believe that sometime after the Black Pit opened, a single quasi-demon came through and was exposed to the environment of Gelidane. This would have changed it on a fundamental level, turning it from a normal demon of cold into the very first Ice Giant. This demon would eventually become the Ice King.

To verify all that we have guessed, I have taken it upon myself to seek out the Ice King, climb its slopes, and commune directly with it and divine its nature at last. I will write to you with my findings when I return, in this incarnation or the next.

- Gray Walker



tundra beast and wooley ogriphant (Ice Giants cannot obtain nourishment from anything that is not frozen solid). The Ice King is said to dwell in a massive mountain complex of similar design, though its location remains unknown.

Aside from its giant population, Narandu is also home to man-eating frostweres and the fearsome creatures known as Frost Demons. Both subsist on warm-blooded prey, and in fact are not totally unlike in appearance. Although frost demons are winged, this distinguishing feature is often difficult to note, as these creatures have the habit of folding their wings and traveling on foot. It is believed that their eyesight is poor, and that frost demons engage in this practice when tracking prey. A certain way of telling the two creatures apart is to examine the eyes: Frostweres have pupil-less grey orbs, while those of the Frost Demon are more violet in color.

The harsh climate of Narandu allows few plants to prosper in these territories. The exception is the silvery-white snow lily, a plant which, when prepared in an elixir or potion, has the virtue of conferring resistance to cold. As one can only find this plant by traveling to frigid Narandu, the purpose of obtaining snow lily might seem somewhat irrational to those of skeptical or pessimistic bent.

One of the more unusual features of this region is the great chasm known as the Black Pit of Narandu. Located just north of Tamaranth, this supposedly bottomless fissure is the source of many colorful legends. Some claim the Black Pit leads to the demon-haunted dimension of Cthonia. Others believe the Pit to be the entrance to an extensive system of tunnels which wind their way as far south as the Wilderlands of Zaran. Certain scholars, noting the clouds of steam which issue from its gaping mouth, theorize that the Black Pit exits into a vast, underground sea. Even less likely explanations of this geographical phenomenon exist, none of which the author will dignify by mentioning them within the pages of this tome.

During the time I spent exploring the continent of Talislanta. I never once felt even the slightest

urging to venture within sight of this frigid and foreboding realm. Being a firm believer in reincarnation, the Druas known as Shadowmoon was perhaps less protective of his current physical manifestation than I, and so had visited Narandu numerous times. He described to me those shimmering ice peaks, streaked with brilliant red and gold in the light of Talislanta's setting suns. When this instilled no trace of wanderlust in me, he talked of blue diamonds, each the size of a man's fist and sparkling with a frozen azure fire.

Perhaps it was the manner in which his people speak, which conveys in a few words a multitude of thoughts and images. Perhaps it was the fact that my financial resources had once again been eroded by the demands of travel. Whatever the reason, the following dawn found the two of us bound for the frozen wastes of Narandu.

All was indeed as Shadowmoon had described, though I might have appreciated a more accurate account of the prevailing climate, which exceeded my previous conception of the term, "freezing cold." After a time, we came upon an irregular mountain of ice, about which was scattered a profusion of huge, four-clawed tracks. Shadowmoon dismounted and followed the tracks, which led to a cavernous opening in the side of the glacier. Charging me to watch over our steeds, the Druas calmly went forth into the cave.

I stood listening near the mouth of the cavern, but if any sounds emanated from within they were lost in the howling of the northern winds. It began to snow, and then an icy hail rained down upon the bleak terrain. An indefinite amount of time passed, during which I was forced to consider the prospect that my companion had met some untimely demise. I questioned the wisdom of maintaining my vigil, but could not leave the Druas behind.

My perseverance was finally rewarded when Shadowmoon appeared at the cave entrance, bearing with him a small sack of rude cloth. He appeared in good health, a few superficial wounds and rents in his garments notwithstanding. "The Ice Giant Yldre, who brought death to Ardan of L'Haan, has been sent to his next incarnation," said

the Druas. Handing me the sack, which contained a number of uncut blue diamonds, Shadowmoon bade us depart the land of Narandu. It was my pleasure to comply, and at once.

NEFARATUS

Rising ominously above the waters of the Far Seas is the Isle of Nefaratus, a shadowy mound of black ironrock rimmed with jungle. Bleak towers of stone dot the isle, each a hundred feet in height and decorated with the graven images of leering devils. Within, the inhabitants of Nefaratus gaze into mirrors of polished obsidian, and work their dire enchantments and divinations. These are the Black Savants, members of a secret magical order that dates back to the Forgotten Age.

The Black Savants are scholars of the occult, whose interests range from diabolism to all aspects of the lower planes. They stand nearly seven feet in height, and are stoop-shouldered and gaunt in appearance. The traditional costume of the Black Savants includes boots, gloves, cloak and

robes of satiny black cloth, hooded and veiled so as to obscure their features. Only their eyes are normally visible; cold, unfeeling orbs like twin shards of onyx. They carry staves and blades made of black adamant, a rare alloy of silver and black diamond. Only the Black Savants know how to make this metal, which has potent magical properties.

The precise motives of these mysterious beings have long been subject to speculation. Their midnight-black vessels are rumored to sail the cursed waters which lie at the edge of the world. Sailors who have encountered such vessels at sea claim that they are propelled by the efforts of demons, chained to the oars with silver shackles and driven on by giant, copper-skinned devils. Others claim to have seen the black ships pull into certain port cities on moonless nights, only to depart before the coming of dawn.

The Black Savants rarely associate with other peoples, a situation which most decent folk find quite acceptable. Some few have been known to serve as the advisors of kings and tyrants, though seldom for any great length of time. As they do not



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Sailors tell of the bleak towers of stone that can be seen through breaks in the fog if you dare sail close enough. They dot the isle, each a hundred feet in height and decorated with the graven images of leering devils. They whisper of the inhabitants, those they call the Black Savants, who sail in black-hulled ships crewed by chained demons. They claim the Savants commune with the lower planes by means of onyx mirrors.

Sailors don't know the half of it.

The jungle that wreaths the isle is called Umbralwood. It is inhabited by various devils and their kin from the lower planes; gargoyles, imps, horned devil-men, and fiends from your darkest nightmares. These beings serve the Black Savants as vassals do their lord and protect the isle from intrusion.

The central portion of the island is largely lifeless. The bare, black stone supports little beyond lichen, though some of the deeper caves contain a variety of unique fungi found nowhere else on Talislanta.

The stone towers are the dwellings of the Black Savants. While some of the towers rise amid the jungle, most can be found in the barren central region of Nefaratus where they seemingly erupt from the ground like huge and silent fingers from a black cairn.

I had occasion to visit a tower once. The interior was cold as a tomb despite the tropical heat outside, and what scant lighting existed was shed by magical orbs, not flame. I also noticed very little furniture or comforts of any sort, the decor reminding me more of a museum or memorial than a home.

Of the Savants themselves I can tell you little. They never speak, instead using a form of Sign to communicate. They are a secretive lot, even going so far as to hide their forms beneath black and silver robes, veils, and gloves. It is said that when a Black Savant perishes, his body turns to powder or vapor, preserving their secrets even in death.

I know they were once living men, or at least more like men than whatever they are now. They were called the Thane, and they ruled a mighty empire among the lower planes. Thus they existed for eons, growing in knowledge and complacency. They constructed massive colossi and imbued them with strange powers, carved giant devil faces into the cliffs and mountains of their homeland, and all but ignored the signs and prophecies of impending doom.

I do not know how they came to be the unliving beings they are today, or how they came to make a home here on Nefaratus, so far from their former world.

Only the Black Savants know for certain, and they are not talking.

- Doloron

generally allow ships within their territorial waters, practically nothing is known of their homeland. The Imrian slavers have an arrangement with the Black Savants, by which- in return for slaves and other unknown considerations-they are allowed to pass through Nefaratan waters by certain, prescribed routes. It is not known whether the Imrians deal with the Black Savants by choice, or because they fear to do otherwise.

Korak, greatest sorcerer of ancient times, wrote of the Black Savants in Volume Nine of his renowned "Guide to the Lower Planes." In it, he states: "The Black Savants of Nefaratus are adept in the lore of the dark dimensions, and possess certain knowledge of these regions, particularly the Lower Plane of Oblivion. They employ enchanted devices known as obsidian mirrors, which function as viewports and gateways into the nether realms."

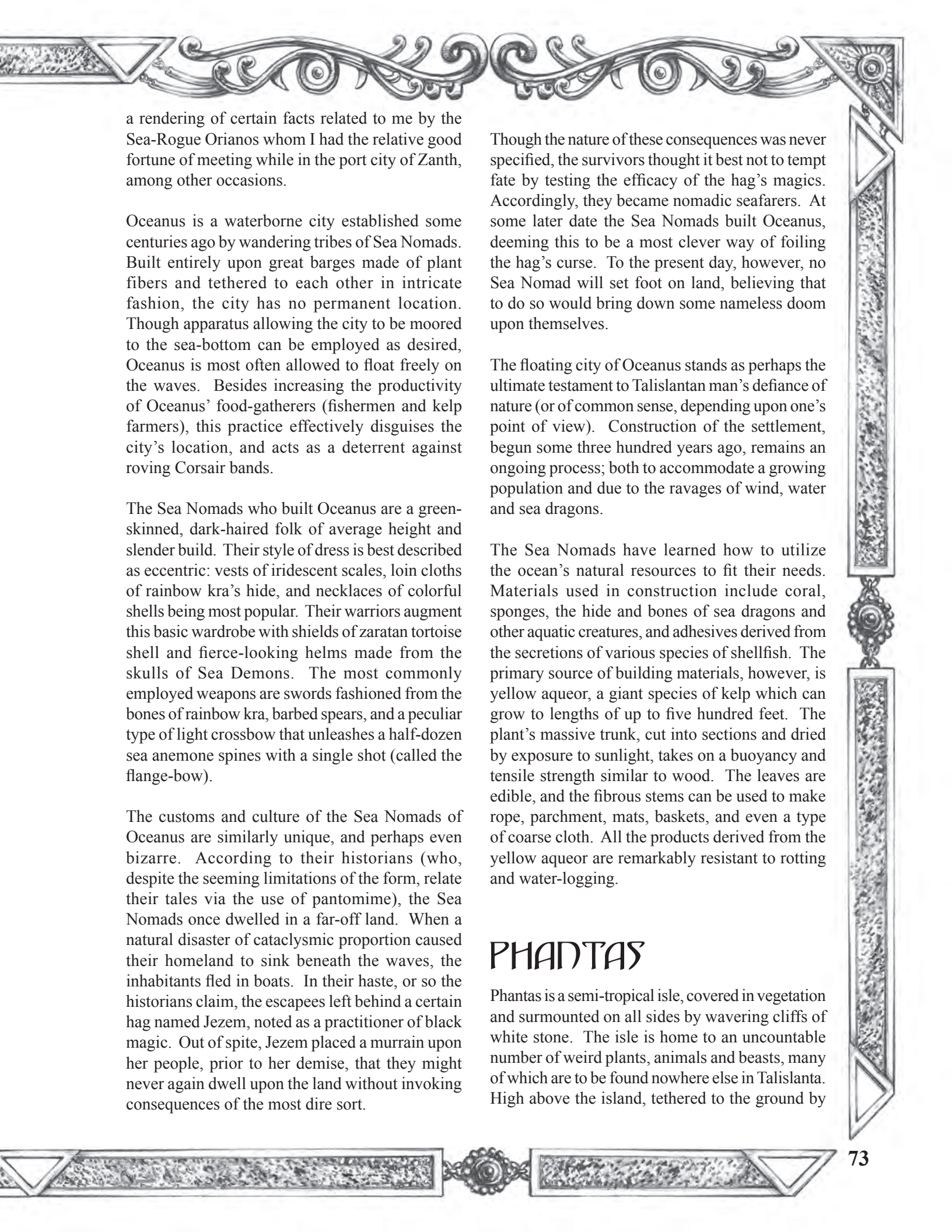
"In order to facilitate my own research on the lower planes, I sought to obtain one of these useful items

from the Black Savants. This I managed to do, but at such a price as to nearly ruin me. Fortunately, I managed to convince one of their number to accept a pair of earth demons, imprisoned in vats of saline solution, in exchange for one third of the stated price. The remainder of the fee I was required to pay in silver, as the Black Savant would not accept gold. What became of the earth demons, I do not know; one can assume their fate to have been unpleasant, for the Black Savants are diabolists, who despise all demons as much as their mentors, the Shaitan, do."

OCEANUS

As any reader of these accounts will surely know, the thought of sailing across vast stretches of treacherous waters, in order to arrive at a city which floats upon the waves, held no appeal whatever for the author. Thus, what follows is





a rendering of certain facts related to me by the Sea-Rogue Orianos whom I had the relative good fortune of meeting while in the port city of Zanth, among other occasions.

Oceanus is a waterborne city established some centuries ago by wandering tribes of Sea Nomads. Built entirely upon great barges made of plant fibers and tethered to each other in intricate fashion, the city has no permanent location. Though apparatus allowing the city to be moored to the sea-bottom can be employed as desired, Oceanus is most often allowed to float freely on the waves. Besides increasing the productivity of Oceanus' food-gatherers (fishermen and kelp farmers), this practice effectively disguises the city's location, and acts as a deterrent against roving Corsair bands.

The Sea Nomads who built Oceanus are a green-skinned, dark-haired folk of average height and slender build. Their style of dress is best described as eccentric: vests of iridescent scales, loin cloths of rainbow kra's hide, and necklaces of colorful shells being most popular. Their warriors augment this basic wardrobe with shields of zaratan tortoise shell and fierce-looking helms made from the skulls of Sea Demons. The most commonly employed weapons are swords fashioned from the bones of rainbow kra, barbed spears, and a peculiar type of light crossbow that unleashes a half-dozen sea anemone spines with a single shot (called the flange-bow).

The customs and culture of the Sea Nomads of Oceanus are similarly unique, and perhaps even bizarre. According to their historians (who, despite the seeming limitations of the form, relate their tales via the use of pantomime), the Sea Nomads once dwelled in a far-off land. When a natural disaster of cataclysmic proportion caused their homeland to sink beneath the waves, the inhabitants fled in boats. In their haste, or so the historians claim, the escapees left behind a certain hag named Jezem, noted as a practitioner of black magic. Out of spite, Jezem placed a murrain upon her people, prior to her demise, that they might never again dwell upon the land without invoking consequences of the most dire sort.

Though the nature of these consequences was never specified, the survivors thought it best not to tempt fate by testing the efficacy of the hag's magics. Accordingly, they became nomadic seafarers. At some later date the Sea Nomads built Oceanus, deeming this to be a most clever way of foiling the hag's curse. To the present day, however, no Sea Nomad will set foot on land, believing that to do so would bring down some nameless doom upon themselves.

The floating city of Oceanus stands as perhaps the ultimate testament to Talislantan man's defiance of nature (or of common sense, depending upon one's point of view). Construction of the settlement, begun some three hundred years ago, remains an ongoing process; both to accommodate a growing population and due to the ravages of wind, water and sea dragons.

The Sea Nomads have learned how to utilize the ocean's natural resources to fit their needs. Materials used in construction include coral, sponges, the hide and bones of sea dragons and other aquatic creatures, and adhesives derived from the secretions of various species of shellfish. The primary source of building materials, however, is yellow aqueor, a giant species of kelp which can grow to lengths of up to five hundred feet. The plant's massive trunk, cut into sections and dried by exposure to sunlight, takes on a buoyancy and tensile strength similar to wood. The leaves are edible, and the fibrous stems can be used to make rope, parchment, mats, baskets, and even a type of coarse cloth. All the products derived from the yellow aqueor are remarkably resistant to rotting and water-logging.

PHANTAS

Phantas is a semi-tropical isle, covered in vegetation and surmounted on all sides by wavering cliffs of white stone. The isle is home to an uncountable number of weird plants, animals and beasts, many of which are to be found nowhere else in Talislanta. High above the island, tethered to the ground by

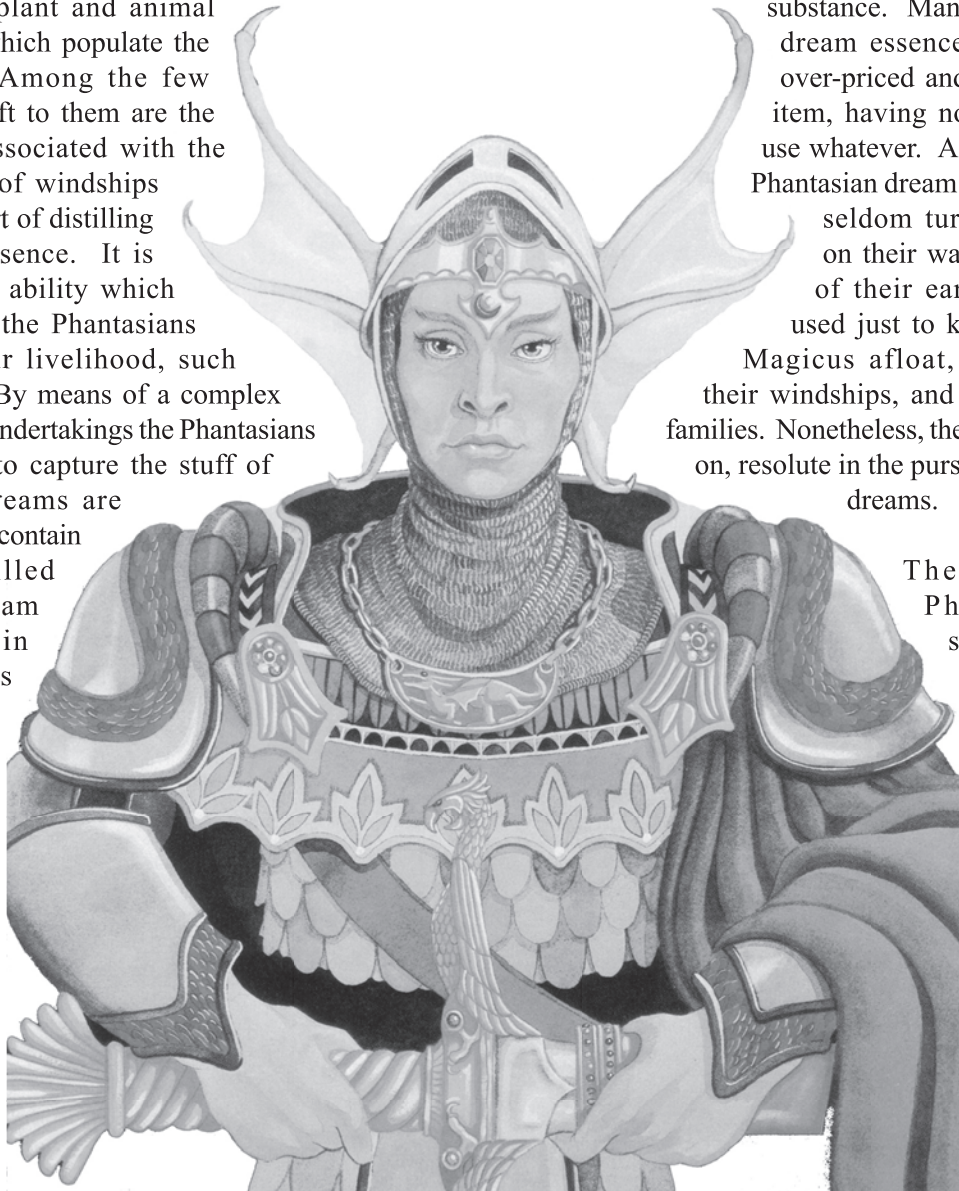
chains of adamant, is a singular structure: a great castle built in the clouds, called Cabal Magicus. Here dwell the last descendants of an ancient race of magicians and thaumaturges, known as the Phantasians.


A pale-skinned people, the Phantasians are tall and very thin, with delicate features reminiscent in some ways of the Thaecians. They dress in long, trailing robes, conical caps, and necklaces of colored crystals. Once among the most skilled practitioners of the magical arts, the Phantasians have forgotten nearly all of the fabled knowledge possessed by their ancestors, who built Cabal Magicus and fostered many of the strange and unusual plant and animal species which populate the island. Among the few secrets left to them are the talents associated with the building of windships and the art of distilling dream essence. It is the latter ability which provides the Phantasians with their livelihood, such as it is. By means of a complex series of undertakings the Phantasians are able to capture the stuff of which dreams are made and contain the distilled fluid dream essence in amberglass vials. These

Phantasian dream merchants pack in velvet-lined chests and transport by windship to such places as Cymril of we Seven Kingdoms, Thaecia, Zandu, Faradun and the Quan Empire. (Note: Since the overthrow of the Quan, the Phantasians rarely make the journey to the Kang Empire to sell their wares. Some few Phantasian dream merchants still make the trek to sell to a handful of Ispasians. The Kang have no interest in dream essence which they consider ridiculous in the extreme. – Jalal Ibn Mahood)

As dream essence can cost as much as nine hundred gold lumens per dram, only the wealthiest of individuals can afford to partake of this exotic substance. Many consider dream essence to be an over-priced and frivolous item, having no practical use whatever. As such, the Phantasian dream merchants seldom turn a profit on their wares. Most of their earnings are used just to keep Cabal Magicus afloat, maintain their windships, and feed their families. Nonetheless, they continue on, resolute in the pursuit of their dreams.

The Isle of Phantas is seldom visited by other peoples, it is rather isolated





location serving as a deterrent to all but the most determined voyagers. The Imrians once invaded Phantas, but fled upon encountering certain of the isle's more bestial inhabitants. The astounding array of flora and fauna unique to Phantas does occasionally lure a few dedicated scholars and naturalists to the island, who must usually suffer the company of adventurers in order to make safe their journey to this faraway place.

Having left the Farad city of Tarun in some haste (Editor's note: See Faradun), I was fortunate enough to meet up with a Phantasian dream merchant whose windship had broken down along the coast of Faradun. In return for my assistance in repairing the ship's damaged levitationals, the Phantasian agreed to transport me to Zanth, capital of Zandu. The two of us effected the necessary repairs in short order, and took to the air.

Enroute, the Phantasian and I discussed our respective situations over a bottle or two of Zandir wine. He professed to have become tired of the business of selling dream essence, and took to drinking heavily. It soon became apparent that my host had lost all semblance of sobriety: singing loudly and off-key, he reeled across the ship's deck, arms akimbo and head thrown back in a crude version of the Caperetto, a popular dance of the day.

Just then the windship hit a sudden downdraft, causing the vessel to lurch precariously to portside. I grabbed the ship's rail barely in time to avoid being thrown overboard, but the Phantasian was not so fortunate. Wine bottle still in hand, he plunged into the sea and was never heard from again. With a heavy heart I took command of the windship and its contents, and once again set sail for Zanth.

THE PLAINS OF GOLARIN

East beyond the Darklands of Urag lie the grassy steppes of the Plains of Golarin. It is a place of some mystery; the crumbling ruins of an unknown number of ancient civilizations litter parts of the interior, long abandoned by their makers and overgrown with weeds and creepers. In the north central region stands the Watchstone, an immense pillar of grey basalt several miles in height. An age-worn stairway, carved into the face of the Watchstone, winds upward in a slow, twisting spiral. From the summit, it is said, one can see clear across Golarin. Where once mighty armies clashed on the plains of battle, now roam great herds of greymanes, ogriphant, and giant, six-legged megalodons. What lost secrets lay hidden here remain largely a matter of speculation, this due in great part to the nature of Golarin's current occupants: the predatory Beastmen.

The Beastmen of Golarin are savage beings, ignorant and primitive, yet possessed of a certain animalistic cunning. A coat of bristling fur covers their muscular frames, usually dirty brown or grey in color. Though humanoid in form, their features are reminiscent of wild beasts: slavering fangs, deep-set eyes, pointed ears and protruding jaws typify the vast majority of these folk.

The Beastmen exhibit few civilized traits, though they are able to employ the fierce steeds known as Darkmanes. The more intelligent members of their species sometimes set crude traps designed to disable prey. Having no noticeable talent as craftsmen, their weaponry and equipment is limited to such gear as they can scavenge or pillage from other races. They have a crude language of sorts, which consists mainly of growls, howling and barking sounds.

The Beastmen range the length and breadth of Golarin in mounted bands of up to forty or so individuals, stopping to rest or make camp in the ruined cities which lie scattered across the plains. They are quite unparticular with regard to their



eating habits, having an equal fondness for herd beast, carrion or luckless travelers. Beastmen sometimes hunt men purely for sport, but only in times when food is plentiful.

When on the hunt, a band of Beastmen behaves much like a pack of wild dogs. They will pursue prey relentlessly, driving their Darkmanes on and harrying their victims until they become weak with exhaustion. Though fierce when encountered in numbers, they have seldom been known for individual courage. Beastmen are superior trackers, however, and will never quit a blood trail.

The ruined cities of this region provide a strong temptation to explorers, adventurers, and all others who view gainful employment as some sort of accursed malady. Hundreds come each year, alone or in groups, to seek their fortune. Most have little to rely on for direction save a hastily scribbled copy of the Phaedran scholar Erastes' famous treatise, "Secrets of the Past." In this rather

long-winded monograph, Erastes claims that the ruined cities hold the following: "The gilded tomb of Irkhan, the mysterious elixirs of immortality, the soulstones of the four blind savants of ancient Acimera, a great crystal golem named Satur, the Nine Books of Knowledge, the treasure-horde of Minra the miser, and the mummified body of the great dragon, Orrix." As Erastes makes no mention of where these purported treasures are to be found (or even what some of them are) many modern-day scholars have branded him a sensationalist; the term "fraud" has also been considered. Still, fortune hunters continue to come to Golarin, though none of Erastes' stated treasures have ever yet been found.



THE QUAN EMPIRE


Beyond the Volcanic Hills and the Jade Mountains lies the great Quan Empire, a land of many and diverse qualities. Its territories are vast, extending from the southern jungles bordering Chana to the northern reaches of the Opal Mountains. Once home to numerous, rival warrior clans, the region came under control of the Quan around the beginning of the New Age. By various, devious means, the Quan eliminated most of their rivals, retaining only such clans as could be coerced or

(Editor's Note: This section of the original Chronicles is, perhaps, the most out of date section in the entire work. It is presented here as it originally appeared in Tamerlin's hand followed by extensive notes bringing the reader up to date on recent happenings of the region.)

bribed into serving them. In ascending order of importance to the Empire, the clans are: the Vajra, the Sunra, the Mandala, the Kang, and the Quan ruling class.

The Vajra are a race of miners and builders, short and squat in stature, with barrel-like torsos and heavy limbs. Their bodies are covered with overlapping, orange-brown plates similar in appearance to a pangolin. For many centuries, the Vajra occupied the mountains and hills of northern Quan. They constructed great tunnel-complexes, built underground fortress-cities, and mined precious stones and metals.

The Quan invaded their territories in force, taking the normally peaceful Vajra by surprise. The Vajra fought valiantly, but were simply overwhelmed by the superior numbers of their foes. Faced with the extinction of their race, the Vajra relented,



becoming the first subjects of Quan. They now serve their conquerors as miners, engineers, stone workers, and low-class infantry. The gold and gemstones received from the Vajra's mines have made the Quan among the wealthiest of Talislanta's peoples.

The Sunra are a semi-aquatic race of humanoids who live in the fabulous Coral City of Isalis, located in the Inland Sea of southern Quan. They are elegant creatures, graceful in stature, with silvery-scaled skin and deep blue eyes. Skilled navigators, the Sunra once ranged the Far Seas from the Crescent Isles to Thaecia. In their glittering dragon barques, they hunted sea dragons, and traded with the people of the Floating City of Oceanus.

The Quan conquered the Sunra by using Vajra engineers to dam the River Shan, sole tributary of the Inland Sea. Rather than allow the Inland Sea to be reduced to a salt marsh, the Sunra accepted the rulership of the Quan. Sunra fishermen and sea farmers now provide the Quan Empire with much of its food. In their ornate dragon barques (two-masted sailing vessels built to resemble sea dragons), the Sunra serve as the naval branch of the Quan military. They are the finest sailors, using intricately designed astrolabes to navigate according to the position of Talislanta's two suns and seven moons.


The Mandalans are a golden-skinned folk, slender of build and hairless, with almond eyes and pleasant features. They created an advanced and enlightened culture, centered amidst the pastel spires, arches and promenades of the stately coastal city of Jacinth. A race of scholars and savants, the Mandalans abhorred violence, considering militarism to be the domain of unsophisticated and primitive peoples. The Quan, sailing in the dragon barques of the Sunra, laid siege to Jacinth from the sea and threatened to burn the city to the ground if the Mandalans did not surrender. Having no navy or army of their own, the Mandalans meekly complied. They serve the Quan as artisans, architects, and historians, among other, lesser duties. Finding the Mandalans to be extremely passive, the Quan also employ them as servants,

gardeners, and menial laborers.

The Kang are a tall and fierce people with fiery-red skin, white, pupil-less eyes, and almost reptilian features. They wear their long, black hair pulled straight back in a single queue, iron collars and armbands being the fashion among their warriors. Mounted on the large, bi-pedal lizards known as striders, the nomadic Kang clans dominated the dreary plains of the Grey Lands for many centuries. The Quan, surveying the black iron-clad hosts of the Kang, decided against engaging their red-skinned rivals on the field of battle. Instead, they sent Mandalan emissaries bearing gifts to the Kang war chieftains.

For seven days, the Mandalans delivered wagonload after wagonload of gold, silver, and gemstones, until a small mountain of treasure stood at the feet of the amazed leaders of the Kang. A captain of the Quan army, attired in armor of gold leaf, then rode up on a similarly caparisoned steed. "This is but the smallest portion of the wealth of the Quan Empire," he said. "Join with us against our enemies, and you will become rich men." The Kang war chieftains accepted the offer without hesitation, becoming mercenary subjects of the Quan Empire.

The Quan themselves are a pale-skinned folk of average height and build. Once a barbarian people, they now exhibit the lofty airs and delicate sensibilities normally associated with royalty. They are an unexceptional race, possessing little in the way of intelligence or creativity, but being sufficiently aggressive and cunning to rule an empire. The Quan do not work, but simply oversee the various peoples that their ancestors conquered, who together supply them with all their needs. Even the lowliest Quan dress in costly silk garments, the elite of their kind being notable for the most extravagant and garish costumes: elaborate head dresses festooned with baubles, capes of such length that they must be carried by attendants, and so forth. Jewelry of the most ostentatious sort is considered a mark of distinction and elegance, and obesity a sign of wealth and success. From birth, the Quan are attended hand and foot by slaves, who feed them, bathe them, and



carry them about on cushioned palanquins.

Quan society is governed by a rigidly enforced caste system which divides the populace into distinct classes. In descending order, these are: the Grand Elite (the Emperor of Quan and his family), the High Elite (Quan of favored status), the Elite (all other Quan), the Honorary Elite (non-Quan, granted upper class status as a reward for exceptional service; only pure-blood Quan may ever advance beyond this rank), Luminaries (seven separate orders of ascending rank by which non-Quan may advance in status), Kang, Mandalan, Sunra, Vajra, and undesirables (thieves, miscreants, and foreigners).

By careful manipulation of this system, the ruling Quan classes maintain control of the population, rewarding those most loyal to the regime. The Kang, turned into fawning, obsequious puppets by their greed for gold, serve most loyally. They will do almost anything to achieve the exalted rank of Honorary Elite, and are renowned throughout the realm as plotters and schemers of the first order. The Quan employ them in nearly all branches of the military, and to keep the lower classes in line.

There are seven major settlements in Quan: the capitol city of Tian, the coastal city of Jacinthe, Isalis, and the military outposts of Karang, Vishana, Shonan and Hadran. Tian, also known as "The Golden City," is built on an island. Situated amidst a man-made lake fed by waters diverted from the River Shan, the city can only be reached by boat. Tian was designed by Mandalan architects at the command of the Emperor of Quan, who demanded that the capital of Quan surpass in beauty even the Mandalan city of Jacinth. It is considered by many to be the most splendid city on the continent. The gilded spires and domes of the Palace of a Thousand Fountains, wherein the Emperor resides, is especially notable.


The coastal city of Jacinthe, once the center of Mandalan culture, is now a great resort area used by the wealthiest of the Quan ruling class. A large part of the Mandalan population still lives here, serving as slaves of the Quan Empire. In Jacinth

are found gardens of crystal dendrons, mosses and prismatic blossoms, and ancient collections of scrolls and books, few of which are ever used anymore. Elite units of the Kang Dragons guard the city from attack by land and Sunra warships patrol the harbor, where Quan pleasure barges ply the peaceful waters.

Of Quan's other settlements: The Coral City of Isalis, besides being home to the majority of Quan's Sunra population, serves as the Empire's foremost naval installation. Quan's vast flotilla of dragon barques is stationed around the city, which is accessible only by three outlets of the Shan River. Sunra sea-farmers ply the shallows, harvesting kelp, algae, and other aquatic foodstuffs. Moonfish, rare creatures reserved by law for the ruling class Quan, are caught here and shipped to Tian in water-filled spheres of colored glass. A contingent of Kang troops maintains order and discipline.

Karang, located to the north, is a walled citadel built by the Vajra to safeguard against incursions of barbaric Harakin from across the Opal Mountains. Much of Quan's Vajra population lives in this ponderous structure, which is criss-crossed with catacombs and tunnels after the Vajra style. Precious stones and metals from the Vajra's mines are stored here until they can be shipped by caravan to Shonan and Tian. Kang trackers patrol the border regions with tarkus, their deadly hunting beasts.

Vishana, located in the hot and humid jungles of the far south, is a military outpost of some importance to the Empire. A barrier of wooden stakes surrounds the fortress, which is situated near the mouth of the River Shan. It can also be reached by road, though the way is made difficult by the presence of wild beasts and Witchmen from the Jungles of Chana. Several garrisons of Kang trackers and cavalry operate from Vishana, patrolling and keeping safe the Empire's southern borders. All wish they were somewhere else. A number of Mandalans serve here, gathering rare herbs for shipment to the north. Articles taken in battle with the Chana Witchmen are also in demand, including trained wrist-vipers, magical



adjuncts and shrunken heads.

Shonan is primarily a military installation, though it also serves as a center of trade and as home to many of the Kang. It is located at a nexus of the River Shan and the Emperor's Road, with a bridge nearby. Built of dull grey stone from the Volcanic Hills, Shonan is surrounded by a forty-foot wall lined with rows of black iron spikes. It is an impregnable fortress which has withstood countless attacks by the Sauran tribes, who dwell to the west. Hundreds of troops are stationed here, including Kang trackers, cavalry Elite units and Vajra artillerists and engineers. Goods of many sorts pass through Shonan: precious metals, gemstones and cerulean dye from Karang, foodstuffs and moonfish transported up the River Shan from Isalis, rare herbs and hardwoods from Vishana, and fine Mandalan silkcloth from Jacinthe. Kang warriors often take their leave in Shonan, hoping to impress the fiery Kang women with tales of their heroic exploits.

The Citadel of Hadran is the largest military installation in the Empire, housing thousands of Kang troops, striders and support personnel. Built of marbled green and black stone from the Jade Mountains, Hadran serves as the headquarters of the Overlord, the supreme commander of the Kang, subject only to the Emperor himself. The forces stationed here are responsible for the security of the Bridge at Hadran, a massive structure which spans a great chasm some six hundred feet in depth. Hadran is the gateway to the Quan Empire, strategically important from any of several different points of view; the bridge allows access to the west as well, a source of some concern to the Rajans, Carantheum and Faradun.

Despite an outward appearance of civility, the Quan rule their empire with merciless precision. Most criminal offenses are punishable by death, a variety of cruel methods being employed to achieve the desired result. Individuals accused of breaking the law are typically hauled before a Kang magistrate and sentenced without trial. As it is impossible for individuals to bring charges of any sort against a person of higher rank or social status, injustice is rife among the less privileged

classes. Those seeking to elude the Quan's brand of justice are hunted down by Kang trackers and their beasts, which are said to be most efficient.

The Quan have no political or religious affiliations, the two concepts being without interest to these folk, who consider themselves akin to gods. Although they tend to be distrustful of strangers, the Quan are not entirely averse to doing business with foreigners. Imrian coracles sometimes sail to Jacinth to buy or sell slaves, and merchants from Djaffa, Farad and the Seven Kingdoms compete for trade contracts in the cities of Hadran and Shonan. No foreigner may travel across the Empire without first obtaining an official permit, however. Issued in the form of a lead tablet stamped with the Emperor's seal, these devices are available at Hadran and Jacinth, and cost upwards of one thousand gold lumens apiece.

My experience with the Quan was, by all accounts, uncharacteristically pleasant, and for a time quite profitable. I was traveling along the Emperor's Road, some hundred and thirty miles from the capitol of Tian, when a heavily armed troop of Kang warriors ordered my wagon off the highway. My questions regarding the reason for this delay were met with a meaningful show of weapons. In the interest of self-preservation, I acceded to the local protocol and kept further utterances to myself.

The reason for these procedures soon became apparent. From far off in the distance came the trumpeting of horns, accompanied by the strident sounds of cymbals and gongs. A great procession came slowly into view, trundling its way towards Tian: dancers in Mandalan silks, musicians in colorful raiment, cushioned litters perched atop the backs of giant ogriphants, carriages decorated in gold leaf and jade, and a thousand of the Kang's elite dragon cavalry dressed in full battle armor. At the center of this festive entourage rode the Emperor himself, his mode of conveyance a spectacular, gilded tower drawn by four crested dragons.

As the procession passed slowly by, I thought to see the Emperor cast an idle glance in my

direction, then turn to mutter something to his advisors, who hovered about him in the manner of sycophants. A few minutes later, twelve Kang warriors surrounded my wagon and ordered me to follow at the rear of the Emperor's entourage. Keeping in mind my earlier encounter with the Kang, I nodded and complied.

We arrived in the capital four days later, whereupon I was brought before the Emperor of Quan. Slaves carried in the contents of my wagon, mainly curios from the Western Lands and a few artifacts gleaned from the ruined cities of the Wilderlands. The Emperor's advisors examined these articles, discarding some and taking others to the Emperor for his inspection. Not a word was spoken to me during this time, causing me no little apprehension with regard to the ultimate fate of myself and my wares. The Emperor, without bothering even to acknowledge my presence, motioned casually to his elite Kang guards, signifying that the audience had come to a close.

I was then escorted out of the hall, down a long corridor, and into an elegantly furnished anteroom. Here, much to my relief, I was informed by a translator that the Emperor had been favorably impressed with my collection of curios. Marking me as an accomplished explorer, the great tyrant had decided that I would be sent to the far corners of the Empire, there to gather information about these faraway lands. A troop of Kang warriors and a female Mandalan guide would accompany me, all reasonable expenses to be paid by the Quan Empire. As there was no indication that I was to be given a choice in the matter, I accepted the Emperor's offer. Thus did I meet the beautiful Zen, and embark upon a series of further travels lasting some two and a half years.

In addition to the Empire's sizeable humanoid population, many strange creatures dwell in the land of Quan. Shriekers, terrible metal-plumed birds, haunt the Cerulean Forests of the northern sector, as do yaksha and muskront. Wild striders, tarkus and winged azoryl prowl the Greylands, where crested dragons are sometimes found. The southern jungles are to be avoided, for reasons mentioned earlier and due to the infrequent

appearance of multi-headed kaliya. The River Shan and the waters of the Inland Sea and coastal regions are somewhat more benign. Nevertheless, the smart traveler will keep an eye out for lurkers, rainbow kra, and grey ikshada, which are not unknown in these parts.

My name is M'Tara Jamal. I have been in the service of the Quan and later the Kang Empire since... has it been so long... the year 611NA. A Thaumaturge of some skill, I was initially retained by a Quan noble, whose name is of little import to this treatise, to perform various architectural and engineering services on his country estate. Having recently been contacted by my good friend Quen, I will do my best to bring the recent events of the Kang Empire to light.

The year 611 NA was a momentous one in the eastern half of Talislanta for it was the year of the Silent Insurrection. In that year, the Kang, the mercenary slaves of the Quan, quietly and without violence usurped control of the Quan Empire.

Trouble had been brewing in the Empire for decades as the Quan became more and more decadent with each generation. It was only a matter of time before a rebellion erupted. Much to the surprise of most observers however, myself included, the rebellion began and ended on the very same day.

Under the clever tutelage of Mandalan Savants, the Kang Warlord Rakshan had grown up disgusted with the state of the Empire and dreamed of a day when the Kang would take control from the weak and decadent Quan and usher in a new and glorious future.

After years of secret plotting, he was finally able to gather enough support from the vast majority of the Kang military and, in one fell swoop, toppled the Quan government with little to no resistance. Realizing that it would take time to create a new and powerful government, Rakshan retained many Quan nobles as figureheads although the Imperial family were executed for

crimes against the Empire. Rakshan elevated a nephew of the ex-Emperor to the throne. In reality, the new Emperor was impotent and all true power rested with Rakshan and the Kang. As far as the majority of the Empire and foreign governments were concerned, nothing had changed and life went on as usual.

Over the following years, Rakshan put his reforms into action, slowly but surely replacing the old Quan power structure with one that fit the Kang sensibilities. Finally in the year 614 NA, the Quan were unceremoniously stripped of their citizenship, all Quan wealth was expropriated by the Kang government and all Quan were ordered to return to the city of Tian where they were forbidden to leave on pain of death. In a 3 year span, the once powerful Quan had been stripped of power and wealth and were now prisoners in their once-capital city. Some few Quan did manage to escape the Empire and now live as fugitives and refugees in foreign lands but most now live squalid lives in the ramshackle city of Tian, subsisting as best they can. As my employer was led off in chains, I found myself ordered into the personal service of Rakshan himself.

The other slave races; the Vajra, Mandalans, Sunra and Ispasians, did nothing but stand and watch as their world was turned upside down. To them, nothing much had changed; one master was replaced by another and they continued to be slaves of the Empire. As the years passed however some things did change. The Kang, more interested in military matters than anything else, loosened their grip on the other races. Still servants to the Kang, the other races saw some improvements to their lot in life.

Rakshan, now fully in power, ordered a massive build up of the military and let it be known that the Kang Empire would tolerate no dissent from within or threat from without. The Crimson Horde was mobilized and ordered to engage the enemies of the Empire and in 615 NA a massive campaign was launched against the Sauran tribes of the Volcanic Hills. Meeting with initial success, this war soon ground to a standstill, a situation that persists to this day.

The following year, 616 NA, the Kang began making a concerted effort to finally rid the Empire of the threat posed by the Mondre Khan which succeeded in curbing the raids of these half-men but little else. Similar measures were taken in the south against the dreaded Witchmen of Chana although a full-fledged assault on this jungle land was stalled as events began to take a turn for the worse for Warlord Rakshan.

The Crimson War, also called simply the Kang Civil War, began on the third day of Laeolis in the year 620 NA, nine years after the Silent Insurrection. The Warlord Rakshan was challenged for the right to rule by Battlelord Kalesh of House Kurok. During the traditional duel to determine leadership, Kalesh signalled for invisible assassins to strike down Rakshan, but luckily the Warlord managed to escape this dishonorable act.

The seven Houses that supported Kalesh, which would become known as the Bloodpact Legion, stormed the city in an attempt to cut off any escape route, but the Warlord escaped aboard the first Kang windship-of-war, the Sword of Zoriah. It seems the arch enemies of my own people, the Rajans, were in league with Kalesh and supplied the Bloodpact Legion with intelligence, assassins and, most importantly, several windships (whose technology they stole from our allies in the Seven Kingdoms).

Still, a full ten houses remained loyal to Rakshan as the cities of the Empire began to fall into anarchy. The two opposing sides fought pitched battles across the length and breadth of the land.

As the Kang fought brother against brother, little heed was paid to the other citizens of the Empire and the Mystic Warriors, long time and secretive adversaries of the Empire seized on the chance to liberate as many slaves as possible. With their aid, many thousands of slaves, mostly Mandalans but some few Sunra and Vajra as well, fled the Empire. Many found their way to my own homeland of Carantheum while others struck out for Faradun, Hadj, Danuvia, Kasmir, Cymril and even as far as Zandu in the Western Lands. As I came to know and respect Rakshan, I opted to stay in his service rather than flee back to Dracarta. I have since used my thaumaturgical skills wherever I can be of service to help defeat Kalesh and his traitors.

As I write this it is the 7th day of Ardan, 621 NA and the outcome of the war has all but been determined. After several initial victories, the Bloodpact Legion has been on the defensive for a season now and has all but lost any hope of usurping the Empire from Rakshan's control. Kalesh's Rajan allies have deserted him after loosing all 4 of their windships to the fury of the Sword of Zorah. A recent rumor, if it is true, may finally bring an end to this bloody war. The rumor in question is that Rakshan, being the enlightened leader that he is, may be close to releasing the slaves of the Empire of their servitude, and granting all loyal residents full citizenship status. Should this rumor be proven fact, great changes are in store for the Kang Empire in the coming months as the Sunra, Vajra and Mandalans join the ranks of free citizens of Talislanta. With such a proclamation, no doubt many ex-slaves would throw their support behind Rakshan and assist in finally putting to rest the Crimson War.

— M'Tara Jamal

RAJ

Far to the east, beyond the scorching sands of the Red Desert, lies the warlike nation of Raj. It is a harsh and arid land, made hospitable only by numerous small oases found scattered across its far-ranging territories. The Jade Mountains form its southern border, merging in a northward-sweeping arc with the treacherous Volcanic Hills. Elsewhere, the terrain is monotonous in form, a sprawling expanse of yellow sand interrupted only by patches of date-palm, nettle and briarbrush.

Known as "the Scourge of the Desert Kingdoms," Raj is the most populous of the eastern lands. Many nomadic tribes make their home here, including the Aramut, Zagir, Shadinn, and the Virds. The rulers of this country, however, are the Rajans: fierce, dark-skinned folk, tall and wiry of build, with diabolical features, horn-like protrusions jutting forth from the chin and forehead, and blood-red eyes. They dress in dark grey capes, veiled head dresses and loose-fitting garments bound with cords at the wrists, ankles, and waist. These cords, made of braided linen, are used for many practical purposes by the Rajans, including the strangling of enemies. It is the unfriendly custom of both the males and females to carry concealed weapons on their persons, curved daggers being considered especially elegant. The Aramut and Zagir are shorter in stature, and favor less elaborate attire, while the Shadinn are veritable giants, averaging nearly seven feet in height. The Virds, a mongrel people, are devoid of any single set of definable characteristics.

The Rajans are a race of fanatics, utterly devoted to the Khadun, absolute ruler of Raj and Necromancer-Priest of the Nihilist Cult (the official religion of the state). His followers claim that the Khadun is the earthly manifestation of the dread entity known as Death, and revere him as a demi-god. They believe that only by dying can they be one in spirit with their mystic ruler, and so are eager to sacrifice their lives for any cause that he endorses. Along the same line of reasoning, the Rajans claim that by killing non-believers, they convert them to their morbid and insane religion. Members of the cult are called the Followers of Urmaan



A warlike and violent people, the Rajans long ago conquered and subjugated the other nomadic tribes of the region. Employing the vanquished peoples as slave labor, the Rajans built Irdan, a massive fortress constructed of stones hauled from the Jade Mountains. Irdan is the only permanent settlement in Raj, and serves as the country's capital. Untold thousands of troops—"numerous as the desert sands," or so it is said—are stationed in and around the fortress: mail-clad Rajan elite cavalry, Aramut lancers, Zagir archers, Shadinn armored land lizard units, and scimitar-wielding Vird infantry.

The Rajans have long coveted the lands which lie to the west, particularly the ore-rich sands of the Red Desert. Despite several attempts to wrest control of this region from Carantheum, the Rajans have never been able to accomplish this goal. Defeat has never swayed them from this cause, however; the Khadun has sworn to crush Carantheum if every man, woman and child in Raj must die in the attempt. As the Rajan generals are unfortunately renowned more for their fanatical obedience to the Khadun than their tactical abilities, outside observers have speculated that such a result is well

within the realm of possibilities.

More effective are the Necromancers of the Nihilist Cult, who dwell within the Temple of Death in Irdan. They wear dark ritual vestments and skull-like, iron masks. Those of great power claim to be capable of manifesting a third eye in the center of the forehead, purportedly of use in detecting invisible or spirit presences. The Necromancers protect the Khadun, and are responsible for training the elite corps of torturers and assassins known as the Torquar. Under the personal command of the Khadun, the Torquar export terrorism and subterfuge to many lands. Its members are known for their skill with various unusual weapons, including the Da-Khar (leather gauntlets equipped with retractable metal claws).

Raj has few marketable resources, but is rich in gold, which is mined by slave labor and transported by caravan from the Jade Mountains to the fortress city of Irdan. The Rajans use their gold to purchase weapons, slaves, and narcotic herbs from Faradun, the only nation with whom the Rajans have any sort of trade ties. No other business is done in Irdan,



as the Rajans do not fancy foreign merchants in their country.

The nomadic Djaffir merchant tribes do not take kindly to this attitude, which they consider a restraint of trade. Consequently, they and their bandit brethren will seldom pass up an opportunity to “pull the beards of the Rajans” (as they like to put it). Having spent some time with one of the smaller merchant tribes, I can personally attest to the vehemence with which the Djaffir pursue such activities.

I am reminded of an incident which occurred at the eastern edge of the Wilderlands of Zaran. The tribe I had been riding with was known to do business with the Kang, mercenary protectors of the Quan Empire. To do so, the Djaffir had to follow a circuitous route through the Volcanic Hills to the Kang installation at Hadran. The only alternative to this was to trespass through a heavily patrolled sector of Raj, risking encounters with the Rajans enroute to the bridge at Hadran. Naturally, the Djaffir always chose the latter approach, rationalizing that this was the shortest and least time-consuming route to Hadran.

On this particular occasion, the tribe decided that they would show their utter disdain for the Rajans by venturing into their territories during broad daylight. I assured them that they need not be so bold merely to impress me, which they considered a grand joke. On the next day, we rose before dawn and approached within a mile of the Raj border. There we waited, mounted on our swift ontra, a cool night wind blowing at our backs. When Talislanta’s twin suns finally broke across the horizon, the tribe’s chieftain raised his scimitar and let forth an exultant cry. The rest of the tribe replied in kind, and we were off, thundering across the plains and into Raj.

The first Rajans we encountered were a band of Aramut, barely risen from their sleep. Led by our chieftain, we rode straight through the Aramut encampment, the Djaffir capsizing tents and slashing indiscriminately with their blades as they went. We were gone before the Aramut knew what had transpired, leaving their camp in

complete disorder.

Riding at breakneck speed, we next came upon a company of Virds, with much the same result. The Djaffir were wild with the thrill of battle, and becoming ever more bold with each passing mile. At the sight of a Rajan merchant caravan, the nomads shouted in unison some deprecating remark. They descended upon their rivals, wreaking havoc upon the Rajans’ baggage trains before again dashing off towards Hadran.

This last incident aroused the attention of a patrolling contingent of Rajan cavalry, who set off after us in hot pursuit. When the bridge at Hadran finally came into view, my heart leapt with joy, then just as quickly sank; blocking the bridge was a unit of Shadinn land lizards, armed to the teeth. With the Rajans at our heels and the Shadinn ahead, our doom seemed imminent.

The Djaffir, though certainly aware of our plight, continued to ride at full gallop towards the bridge. The Shadinn responded, charging forth on their armored lizards to meet us head on. This, evidently, was what the Djaffir had hoped would occur. Scattering like leaves on the wind, the nomads rode in between and around the Shadinn’s lumbering beasts, who nearly fell over themselves trying to match the agile maneuvers of the Djaffir’s swift steeds. Some of the Djaffir threw their cloaks over the heads of the land lizards, creating further confusion; others let loose with their short bows, leaving riderless lizards in their wake.

The pursuing Rajan cavalry arrived on the scene only to become hopelessly entangled with the Shadinn host, which by this time was in a state of utter disarray. In the ensuing crush of Rajans, land lizards, and Shadinn, the nomads were able to make the bridge. Four of our group had suffered slight wounds, a small price to pay for such sport, at least in the opinion of the Djaffir.

Under the iron rule of the Khadun, Raj is among the most repressive states in Talislanta. The punishment for most crimes is the removal of an appropriate body part: liars have their tongues cut off, thieves lose a hand, voyeurs (those who attempt to peek beneath a Rajan woman’s veil)

lose an eye. The penalty for adultery is said to be especially grim. Individuals accused of treason or heresy (the two offenses are virtually interchangeable, given the make-up of the Rajan government) are imprisoned in the dreaded Tower of Irdan, where the Rajan torturers and Inquisitors practice their arts.

Raj has political ties with no other nation, except perhaps Faradun. The presence of the Rajan hordes remains an impediment to east-west land trade, a situation favorable to Faradun, and one which some suggest the Farad would like to perpetuate. Raj marks Carantheum and Djaffa as hated foes, and bears no love for the Seven Kingdoms. Only the Jade Mountains, the Volcanic Hills and the hostile Sauran tribes separate Raj from the Quan Empire, a condition which some view as a boon, given the Quan's history of expansion and conquest.

The mountains and deserts of Raj are rife with dangerous beasts, including yaksha and sand demons, respectively. Crested dragons, though somewhat rare, are not unknown in these parts, immature specimens being much favored by the Rajan Necromancers for use as steeds. During the spring months, water from thawing ice caps cascades down the Jade Mountains, carrying with it many small bits and chunks of gold. Adventurers with a flair for the melodramatic sometimes attempt to steal into the mountains disguised as Rajans, thereby hoping to become rich. Those who survive this perilous endeavor, in fact, occasionally do.

I will not go into great detail here for the situation has been addressed by other scholars in their commentaries. Suffice to say, the situation in Raj is much as Tamerlin described it these two decades ago with one exception. Because of the duplicity and mercenary nature of the Farad of Tarun, the Rajans have since acquired a rudimentary windship arcanology. This development is of great concern, both here in Cymril but more importantly in Dracarta where the folk of Carantheum now fear a full assault over land and now from the skies. Time will tell how this new arms race will play out. - **Quen**

THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

The territories designated as the Seven Kingdoms represent a loosely organized confederation of seven separate city states, each ruled by its own king. Established during the New Age by the descendants of various peoples displaced by the Great Disaster, the Seven Kingdoms share a common government, known as the Council of Kings. Each has its own national color, and retains all the customs and traditions peculiar to its inhabitants. The seven member nations of this unique confederation are: Cymril, Durne, Sindar, Astar, Taz, Vardune and Kasmir.

Cymril is the erstwhile capital of the Seven Kingdoms, this due as much to the country's central location as anything else. Here dwell the Cymrilians, the descendants of a race of wizards and magicians exiled long ago from the now-defunct Phaedran dynasty. Tall and slender in stature, they have pale green skin and hair, with golden eyes and placid features. There are no prerequisites regarding fashion; all types of exotic apparel are in vogue, though magicians continue to favor the high-collared cloaks worn by their ancient ancestors, the Phandre.

*Cymrilian culture has been evolving since Tamerlin wrote his treatise. Current trends have been leaving the color green behind. In fact, the current trends in Cymril are almost a backlash against the previous generations' love of emerald and jade. Today, all types of exotic apparel are in vogue, with magical enhancements used to alter appearance as desired. On an architectural note, the closure of the mines on the Sea of Glass in Faradun has necessitated the use of new and varied building materials in Cymril; the newest constructions utilizing crystal and wood of all sorts from Durne, Taz, and Vardune. - **Quen***

Sweeping hills and light forest dominate much of the Cymrilian countryside, which is largely

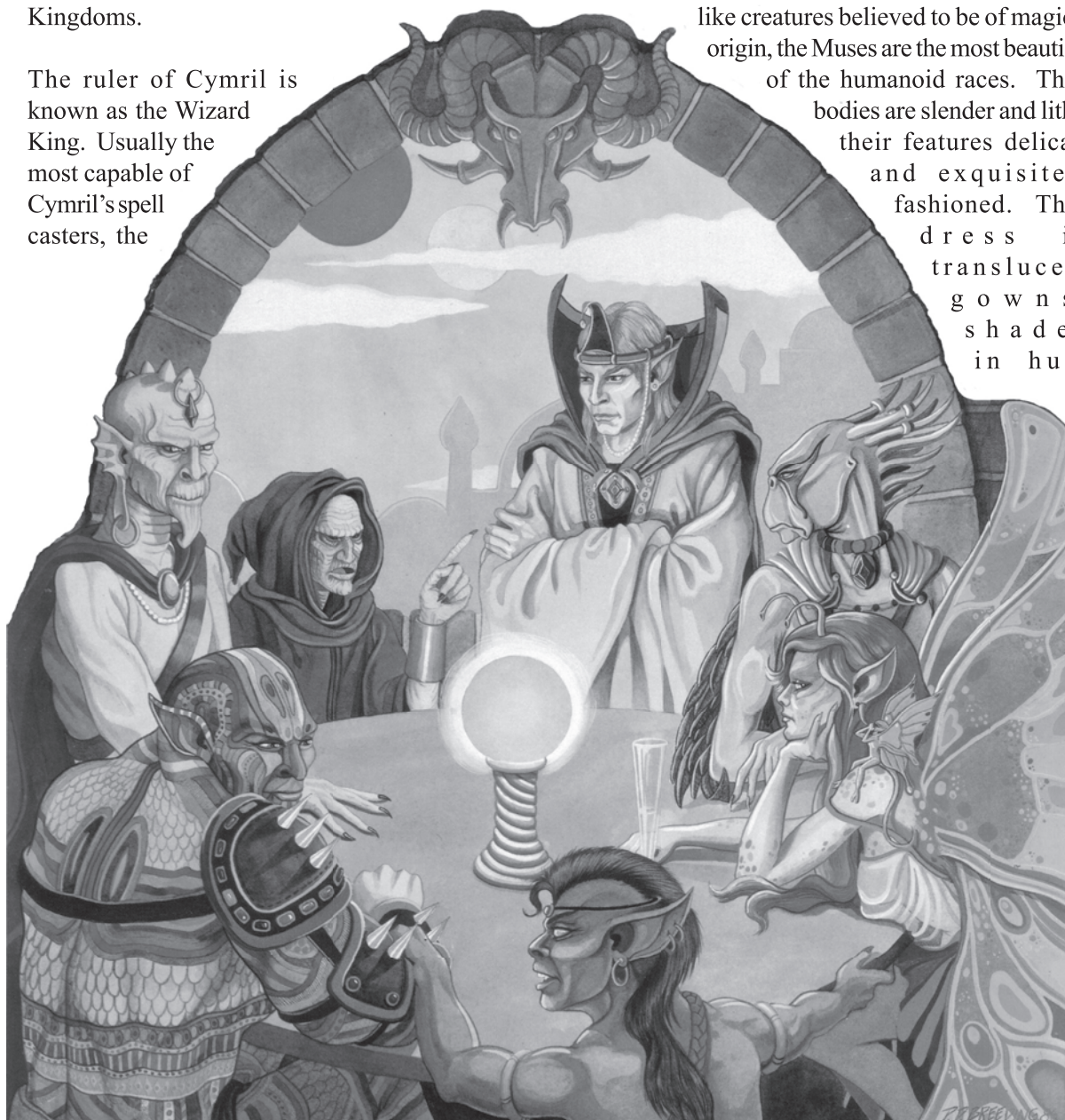
uninhabited. The greatest part of the population lives in the enchanting capital of Cymril, a city of convoluted spires and archways constructed almost entirely of green glass. Here, the Cymrilian magicians practice their arts, creating wondrous windships (sail-powered vessels which ride the winds), potions, powders and other magical adjuncts. Cymril's artisans are unsurpassed in the Western Lands, and are the continent's leading suppliers of amberglass, a crystalline substance with numerous practical uses in the field of magic. Caravans from many lands come here to trade for Cymrilian wares, aquavit (an expensive Cymrilian liqueur), and goods from across the Seven Kingdoms.


The ruler of Cymril is known as the Wizard King. Usually the most capable of Cymril's spell casters, the

Wizard King is elected by popular vote, and serves a term of two or three years. If he is a reasonable sort of fellow, the populace will allow the Wizard King to remain in power for the full term. Once each year, the city of Cymril hosts the Magical Fair, a colorful spectacle lasting two weeks and attended by folk from all across Talislanta. The national color of Cymril is green, a not surprising choice considering the monochromatic Cymrilian pigmentation

Astar is a land of sylvan glades, lakes and streams. Here dwell the last of an ancient and enchanting race of beings known as the Muses. Nymph-

like creatures believed to be of magical origin, the Muses are the most beautiful of the humanoid races. Their bodies are slender and lithe, their features delicate and exquisitely fashioned. They dress in translucent gowns, shaded in hues





complementing the colors of their butterfly-like wings, skin and hair: pastel blue, aquamarine, turquoise, violet, and rose, to name just a few.

The Muses of Astar are by nature flighty and irresponsible. Most are content to lay about, dreaming secret dreams, sipping the nectar of flowers, or gazing at butterflies, birds, and Muses of the opposite sex. As the mood suits them, they may project a thought, an idea, or a mental picture to another Muse or some other creature. All Muses possess this unusual ability, the range and scope of which supposedly increase with practice. The Muses have no settlements, but tend to congregate in small groups scattered throughout the scenic woodlands of Astar. They possess a natural talent for all artistic pursuits, and create enchanting musical instruments, tapestries of colored gossamer and other fine goods, but only when stricken by inspiration.

The Muses of Astar have no king or queen, but draw straws once each month to determine who is to represent their people at the Council of Kings in Cymril. The holder of the short straw is crowned king or queen, as the situation dictates. Though some few of curious bent become adventurers, most Muses are quite content to spend their lives in Astar. Were it not for the occasional visitor from Thaecia (whose people greatly admire the Muses telepathic talents) or other parts of the Seven Kingdoms, few Muses would know anything of the rest of Talislanta. The national color of Astar is azure, probably for no good reason, but possibly in honor of nearby Lake Zephyr, a favorite trysting spot of the Muses.

Vardune is a densely forested region bordering the Axis River to the west. Its inhabitants, the Aeriad, are a race in the process of devolving from an avian to a ground-dwelling species. The Aeriad's vestigial wings, once used for flying, have atrophied from disuse. For the majority of Aeriad, these appendages are more decorative than functional, though some still use them for gliding.


There are two sub-species of Aeriad: Green Aeriad, who seldom exceed five feet in height, and the

taller and somewhat more aggressive Blue Aeriad. Both species are slender and frail in stature, and have skin which glistens with a metallic sheen. A crested cox-comb of feathers adds to the distinctive appearance of these folk. By contrast, their manner of dress is simple and austere, and includes a short tunic and cape of plain viridian linen.

Formerly a race of sky-roving hunters and gatherers, the Aeriad were forced to abandon their traditional way of life when their ancestral homeland was annexed by the forces of the old Phaedran regime. They settled in the forests of Vardune and built a number of small settlements along the eastern banks of the Axis River. The Blue Aeriad, hunters by trade, became the protectors of their race; the Green Aeriad, with their knowledge of seeds and fruiting plants, became horticulturists. They soon adapted to their new existence, and their settlements grew and prospered.

The largest of the Aeriad's settlements is the River City of Vashay, renowned as a producer of useful herbs and plants. Vashay's most important crop is viridia, a giant species of pod-bearing plant. The breathtaking bridge at Vashay and the triple-tiered terrace dwellings of the Aeriad are all made of woven viridia tendrils, as are many other products sold in this region. The plant's ten-foot long pods are filled with a fibrous down which can be spun into cloth (called viridian linen); the pods themselves, when cured, cut to specifications and lacquered, are of use in the making of small skiffs, wagons and roofing materials. The ruler of the Aeriad is The River King, who may be either a Blue or Green Aeriad. The national color of Vardune is aqua-blue.

Durne is a land of grassy knolls, gently rising hills, and sparse woodlands. The folk who live here, known as the Gnomekin, are a diminutive race of humanoids who average just over three feet in height. They have nut-brown complexions, muscular bodies, and wide-eyed, almost child-like features. Both the males and females have a crest of soft, black fur running from the center of the forehead to the small of the back. Despite their small size, the Gnomekin of Durne are quite strong, and are as agile and sure-footed as mountain goats.



Their language sounds much like the purring of cats.

The Gnomekin have but a single settlement, the subterranean city of Durne. Constructed some two hundred feet below ground, the settlement consists of numerous cave dwellings connected by a complex maze of tunnels. Large caverns are used for the growing of mushrooms and tubers, underground lakes serving as hatcheries for several species of subterranean fish and mollusks. The Gnomekin also grow amber crystals, raw materials useful in the making of magical orbs and scrying devices. Durne is ruled by a hereditary monarch known as the Gnome-King, a personage of some local renown. He is responsible for determining fair prices for the goods produced by his peoples, which are delivered by underground trail to Cymril once each month. Additionally, the Gnome-King is commander-in-chief of the country's small but feisty army. The national color of Durne is brown, coincidentally the favorite color of the Gnomekin.

Kasmir is an arid region bordered to the south by the Jaspar Mountains and to the east by the Wilderlands of Zaran. The folk who live here, called the Kasmir, are short and lean, with odd-looking shriveled features. They dress in hooded cloaks, loose robes and sandals, and carry concealed weapons (such as spring-knives and blade staves) on their persons at all times.

The Kasmir are a wealthy people, though how they acquired their fortune is unknown; some say they were once partners of the Djaffir. Whatever their history, the Kasmir are renowned throughout the continent as misers. Their metalsmiths construct the most ingenious and elaborate locking mechanisms, traps and vaults. Kasmir money lenders and appraisers are unexcelled in their craft. They finance caravans, purchase and resell large quantities of goods, and lend money to fund ventures of many different sorts, typically at somewhat high rates. The Djaffir merchant tribes, who still do business with the Kasmir from time to time, commonly refer to them as "Tu-Beshal" (meaning "blood-suckers," though the term carries certain lewd connotations as well).

The capital city of Kasmir is a veritable fortress, guarded by mercenary Thralls from Taz. Here the Kasmir live in windowless stone towers, their doors barred and locked against thieves. The ruler of these people, known simply as the King of Kasmir, holds his job only as long as the wealthy Kasmir money-changers feel he is effectively representing their best interests. Should he fail to live up to their expectations, the King is beheaded and a new ruler chosen. Despite the high pay and numerous perquisites, the position of King is one which few Kasmir aspire to. The national color of Kasmir is purple, an elegant hue popular among all the people of this land.

Taz is a land of thick jungle fading into the swampy mire of neighboring Mog. Here lives the strange race of humanoids known as the Thralls. Bred by the sorcerers of some ancient and forgotten kingdom as an army of slave warriors, the Thralls are tall and muscular of build. Hairless and devoid of pigmentation, they are distinguishable only by sex; otherwise, all Thralls look exactly alike. In defiance of this inbred genetic trait, the Thralls decorate their bodies from head to toe with wildly elaborate tattoos, thereby attaining some degree of individuality.

The Thralls of Taz live in great communal complexes constructed of cut stone blocks, all of which look very much alike. Bred for combat, the Thralls know no other life. Most serve as protectors of the Seven Kingdoms, guarding the various border regions or working as sentinels, caravan guards, and so on. Those of a more creative nature sometimes hire out as mercenaries. The Thralls are ruled by an individual known as the Warrior-King (or Queen, as the case may be) of Taz. The position is open to challenge by duel once every year, the winner being accorded ruling status. The national color of Taz is crimson, or blood red.

Sindar is a land of towering mesas, arches, and strange configurations of time-worn stone. Underground springs and geysers are the only sources of water in this region, which is bordered to the east by the barren canyons of the Dead River. The



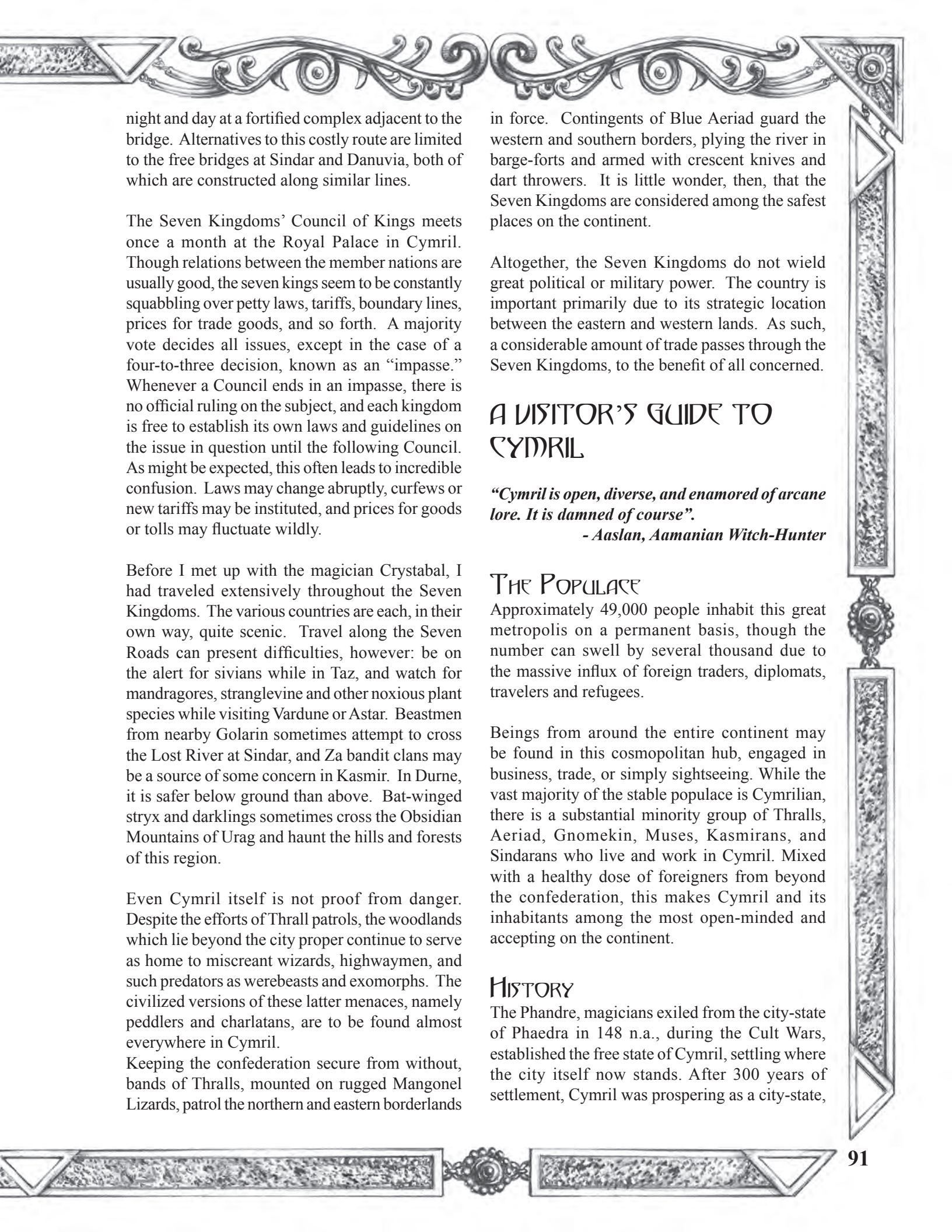
folk who live here are known as the Sindarans. They stand over seven feet in height, are emaciated in build, and have wrinkled, sandy-colored skin. Sindarans have a row of horn-like nodules running from the crown of the head to the back of the neck, dividing the brain into two independently operating organs. Their earlobes are long and distended, and a curved spur of bone protrudes from beneath the chin.

The Sindarans live in small communes, each situated atop a large mesa or some similarly prominent topographical feature. Their dwellings are elegant tiered structures built of carved stone blocks and hardwoods imported from Vardune and Taz. Gossamer curtains, dyed various shades of orange and burnt umber, serve as the outer walls of the Sindarans' structures. Billowing gracefully in the warm breezes, the curtains provide a measure of privacy while retaining a feeling of wide-open spaces. Communication between Sindaran communes is possible by means of large, reflective crystals, mounted on tripodal stands and used to flash messages from one outpost to the next. In this

way, information may be passed rapidly throughout the country.

The Sindarans are renowned as collectors, from menageries of rare beasts to ancient scrolls, coins, curios and objects of art. To finance their private collections, they create fine wares of silver and precious stones (both common in the region), which they sell for gold in Cymril. When not preoccupied with their collections, Sindarans enjoy playing Trivarian, a complex game which other races find incomprehensible. The drinking of Skoryx, a potent liquor of rare qualities, is also a favored pastime. The national color of Sindar is orange.

At the eastern border of Kasmir is a great stone bridge which spans the yawning chasm known as the Dead River. Built by the Sindarans, the bridge is exceptionally sturdy, but a bit narrow. It will accommodate only a single wagon, or perhaps three mounted men riding abreast of one another, at a time. As such, large caravans can sometimes cause considerable delays when attempting to traverse the span. A toll of one gold lumen per person five gold lumens per wagon or other conveyance) is collected by mercenary Thrall guards, stationed



night and day at a fortified complex adjacent to the bridge. Alternatives to this costly route are limited to the free bridges at Sindar and Danuvia, both of which are constructed along similar lines.

The Seven Kingdoms' Council of Kings meets once a month at the Royal Palace in Cymril. Though relations between the member nations are usually good, the seven kings seem to be constantly squabbling over petty laws, tariffs, boundary lines, prices for trade goods, and so forth. A majority vote decides all issues, except in the case of a four-to-three decision, known as an "impasse." Whenever a Council ends in an impasse, there is no official ruling on the subject, and each kingdom is free to establish its own laws and guidelines on the issue in question until the following Council. As might be expected, this often leads to incredible confusion. Laws may change abruptly, curfews or new tariffs may be instituted, and prices for goods or tolls may fluctuate wildly.

Before I met up with the magician Crystabal, I had traveled extensively throughout the Seven Kingdoms. The various countries are each, in their own way, quite scenic. Travel along the Seven Roads can present difficulties, however: be on the alert for sivians while in Taz, and watch for mandragores, stranglevine and other noxious plant species while visiting Vardune or Astar. Beastmen from nearby Golarin sometimes attempt to cross the Lost River at Sindar, and Za bandit clans may be a source of some concern in Kasmir. In Durne, it is safer below ground than above. Bat-winged stryx and darklings sometimes cross the Obsidian Mountains of Urag and haunt the hills and forests of this region.

Even Cymril itself is not proof from danger. Despite the efforts of Thrall patrols, the woodlands which lie beyond the city proper continue to serve as home to miscreant wizards, highwaymen, and such predators as werebeasts and exomorphs. The civilized versions of these latter menaces, namely peddlers and charlatans, are to be found almost everywhere in Cymril.

Keeping the confederation secure from without, bands of Thralls, mounted on rugged Mangonel Lizards, patrol the northern and eastern borderlands

in force. Contingents of Blue Aeriad guard the western and southern borders, plying the river in barge-forts and armed with crescent knives and dart throwers. It is little wonder, then, that the Seven Kingdoms are considered among the safest places on the continent.

Altogether, the Seven Kingdoms do not wield great political or military power. The country is important primarily due to its strategic location between the eastern and western lands. As such, a considerable amount of trade passes through the Seven Kingdoms, to the benefit of all concerned.

A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO CYMRIL

"Cymril is open, diverse, and enamored of arcane lore. It is damned of course".

- Aaslan, Aamanian Witch-Hunter

THE POPULACE

Approximately 49,000 people inhabit this great metropolis on a permanent basis, though the number can swell by several thousand due to the massive influx of foreign traders, diplomats, travelers and refugees.


Beings from around the entire continent may be found in this cosmopolitan hub, engaged in business, trade, or simply sightseeing. While the vast majority of the stable populace is Cymrilian, there is a substantial minority group of Thralls, Aeriad, Gnomekin, Muses, Kasmirans, and Sindarans who live and work in Cymril. Mixed with a healthy dose of foreigners from beyond the confederation, this makes Cymril and its inhabitants among the most open-minded and accepting on the continent.

HISTORY

The Phandre, magicians exiled from the city-state of Phaendra in 148 n.a., during the Cult Wars, established the free state of Cymril, settling where the city itself now stands. After 300 years of settlement, Cymril was prospering as a city-state,

THE CITY OF CYMRIL





and the Seven Roads (actually six, the seventh being the section of the Underground Highway that links Cymril with Durne) were finally constructed in 451 n.a.

Ruled during much of its history by the arch-conservative Tanasians, Cymril's only permitted colors, both in construction and apparel, were green and yellow, and laws were stifling. As corruption became apparent among the Tanasians, the populace elected the liberal Azradamus as Wizard-King in 601 n.a. Seeking to reassert their influence in 603 n.a. a trio of the Tanasian's most powerful magicians attempted to instigate a coup, failing when the Lyceum Arcanum came out in support of Azradamus (the Lyceum's one-time Chief Administrator). The Lyceum's secret archives were opened, bringing to light many age-old scandals regarding the Tanasians. A popular uprising, supported by the Wizard-King, swept the Tanasians and their supporters from power, imprisoning many, and forcing others to flee to foreign lands. Of the three Tanasian magicians who led the attempted coup, Nymande was convicted of treason, placed in stasis and imprisoned in an impermeable orb, Ebonarde fled to parts unknown, and Naryx of the Gloved Hand disappeared.

Since the Tanasians were ousted, many of the old traditions and proscriptions have fallen out of vogue. The obsession with the color green has given way to an avid appreciation of multichromaticism, and Cymril has been rapidly rebuilt to embrace this fact. Unfortunately, while Cymril is enjoying something of a rebirth, many of the exiled Tanasians continue to plot against the liberal Azradamus and his supporters, and sporadic Tanasian terrorism provides a threat against which Cymril is most vigilant.

VISIONS OF CYMRIL

A View from Afar

A great hexagon of variegated crystal, Cymril is set amid sweeping hills of grass. Many elaborate spires, archways, promenades and domes of iridescent glass fill the area encompassed by the city's mighty walls. The surrounding land is a patchwork of picturesque farms, vineyards

and country estates, gradually falling away to woodland and forest. Six roads connect Cymril to the other kingdoms, bustling with trade and travelers from across the continent as a windship takes flight, bound for locations unknown.

At The Gates

Vast twin gates tower 30-foot above the broad road, forged from single pieces of black iron. Impressive walls of pitted yellow-green porphyry extend to the distance, 50-foot high and half as thick. Figures move atop this massive barrier, manning heavy ballista emplacements, or standing ready to dump toxic alchemicals on foolish invaders.

The City Streets

The streets are vibrant with activity, the inhabitants a riot of color and fashions. Ornate equus-drawn carriages, transport those that need to cover large distances, or those that find walking tedious. Many-hued hexagonal slabs of stone interlock to provide walkways bordering a central street of dirt, while a myriad of skyways, balconies, overlapping terraces, and bridges of crystal twist amid the towers above. Every hue and shade of color can be seen on tower, inn, archway or habitation, a chaotic clutter surrounding side streets and the arrow-straight track that heads towards the heart of the city.

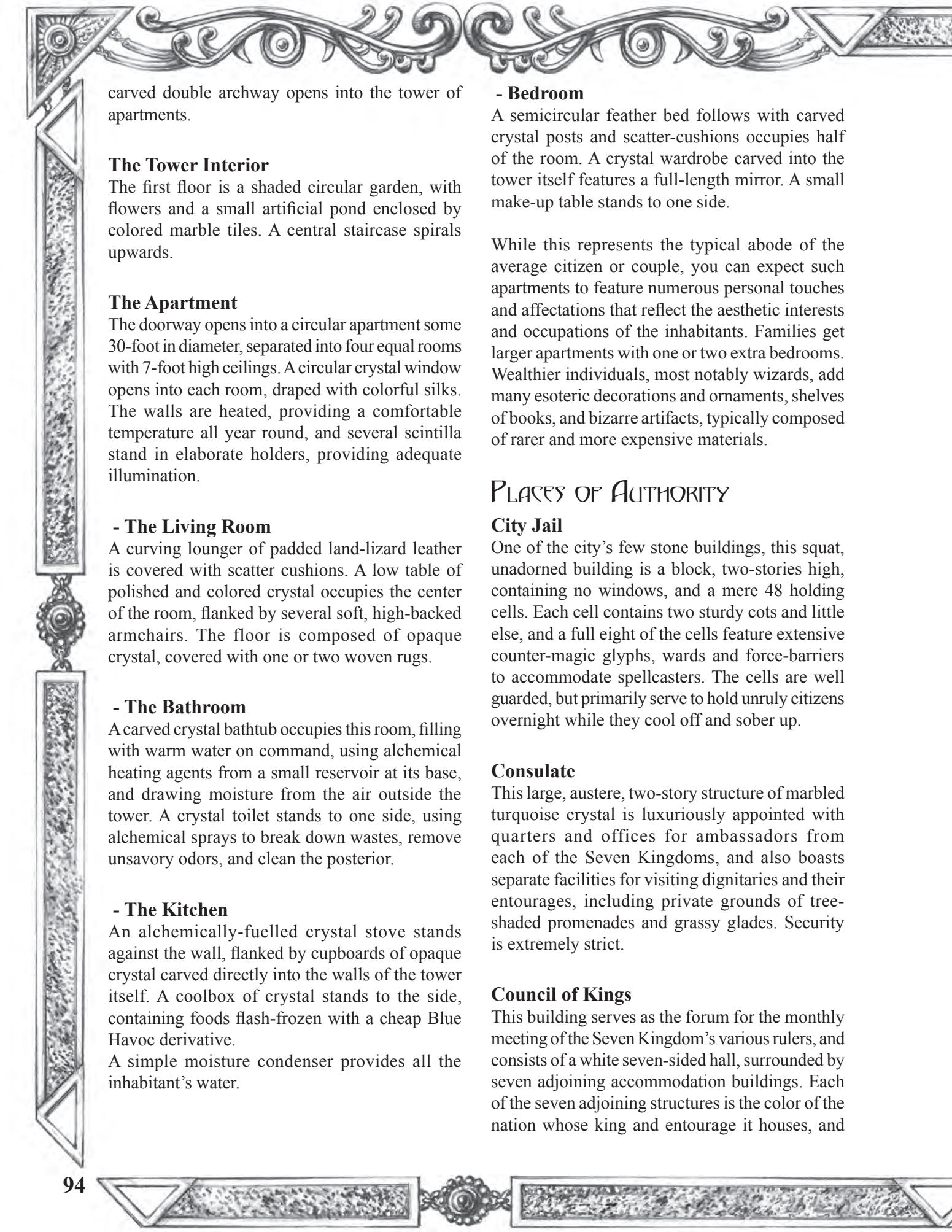
CYMRIL AT NIGHT

Cymril's crystalline architecture glows with the light from within, diffuse radiance softly displaying all the colors of the rainbow. Like a majestic, but abstract, stained glass window when viewed from afar, Cymril is a bustle of activity even at night, as those who can afford to do so, make their way amid the city's innumerable nightspots.

THE TYPICAL DWELLING

An Exterior View

A broad circular tower of multichromatic opaque crystal reaches for the sky, studded with circular windows. It adjoins a broader spiral tower of clashing colors with triangular windows, and an elevated walkway of almost transparent crystal winds its way around them both. An ornately



carved double archway opens into the tower of apartments.

The Tower Interior

The first floor is a shaded circular garden, with flowers and a small artificial pond enclosed by colored marble tiles. A central staircase spirals upwards.

The Apartment

The doorway opens into a circular apartment some 30-foot in diameter, separated into four equal rooms with 7-foot high ceilings. A circular crystal window opens into each room, draped with colorful silks. The walls are heated, providing a comfortable temperature all year round, and several scintilla stand in elaborate holders, providing adequate illumination.

- The Living Room

A curving lounge of padded land-lizard leather is covered with scatter cushions. A low table of polished and colored crystal occupies the center of the room, flanked by several soft, high-backed armchairs. The floor is composed of opaque crystal, covered with one or two woven rugs.

- The Bathroom

A carved crystal bathtub occupies this room, filling with warm water on command, using alchemical heating agents from a small reservoir at its base, and drawing moisture from the air outside the tower. A crystal toilet stands to one side, using alchemical sprays to break down wastes, remove unsavory odors, and clean the posterior.

- The Kitchen

An alchemically-fuelled crystal stove stands against the wall, flanked by cupboards of opaque crystal carved directly into the walls of the tower itself. A coolbox of crystal stands to the side, containing foods flash-frozen with a cheap Blue Havoc derivative.

A simple moisture condenser provides all the inhabitant's water.

- Bedroom

A semicircular feather bed follows with carved crystal posts and scatter-cushions occupies half of the room. A crystal wardrobe carved into the tower itself features a full-length mirror. A small make-up table stands to one side.

While this represents the typical abode of the average citizen or couple, you can expect such apartments to feature numerous personal touches and affectations that reflect the aesthetic interests and occupations of the inhabitants. Families get larger apartments with one or two extra bedrooms. Wealthier individuals, most notably wizards, add many esoteric decorations and ornaments, shelves of books, and bizarre artifacts, typically composed of rarer and more expensive materials.

PLACES OF AUTHORITY

City Jail

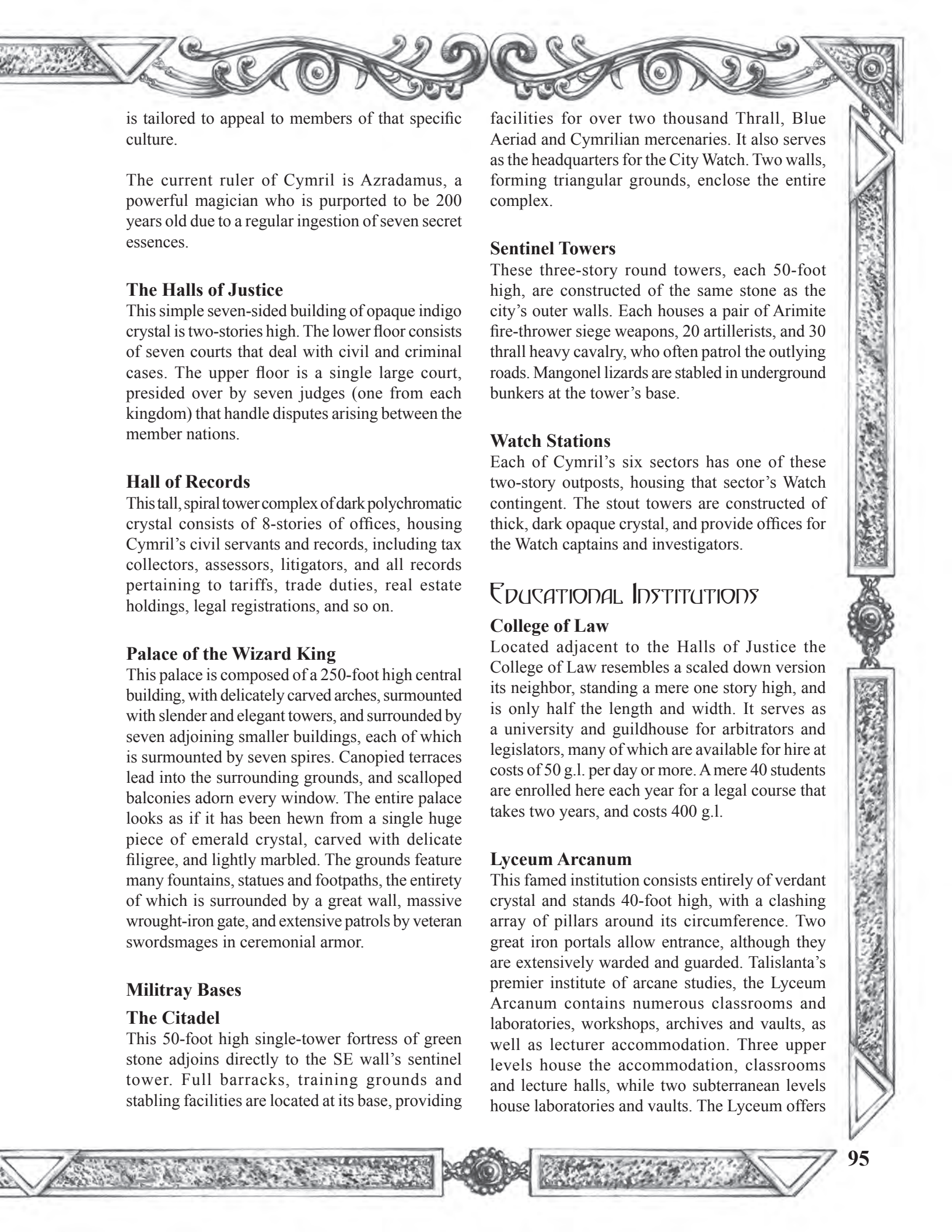
One of the city's few stone buildings, this squat, unadorned building is a block, two-stories high, containing no windows, and a mere 48 holding cells. Each cell contains two sturdy cots and little else, and a full eight of the cells feature extensive counter-magic glyphs, wards and force-barriers to accommodate spellcasters. The cells are well guarded, but primarily serve to hold unruly citizens overnight while they cool off and sober up.

Consulate

This large, austere, two-story structure of marbled turquoise crystal is luxuriously appointed with quarters and offices for ambassadors from each of the Seven Kingdoms, and also boasts separate facilities for visiting dignitaries and their entourages, including private grounds of tree-shaded promenades and grassy glades. Security is extremely strict.

Council of Kings

This building serves as the forum for the monthly meeting of the Seven Kingdom's various rulers, and consists of a white seven-sided hall, surrounded by seven adjoining accommodation buildings. Each of the seven adjoining structures is the color of the nation whose king and entourage it houses, and



is tailored to appeal to members of that specific culture.

The current ruler of Cymril is Azradamus, a powerful magician who is purported to be 200 years old due to a regular ingestion of seven secret essences.

The Halls of Justice

This simple seven-sided building of opaque indigo crystal is two-stories high. The lower floor consists of seven courts that deal with civil and criminal cases. The upper floor is a single large court, presided over by seven judges (one from each kingdom) that handle disputes arising between the member nations.

Hall of Records

This tall, spiral tower complex of dark polychromatic crystal consists of 8-stories of offices, housing Cymril's civil servants and records, including tax collectors, assessors, litigators, and all records pertaining to tariffs, trade duties, real estate holdings, legal registrations, and so on.

Palace of the Wizard King

This palace is composed of a 250-foot high central building, with delicately carved arches, surmounted with slender and elegant towers, and surrounded by seven adjoining smaller buildings, each of which is surmounted by seven spires. Canopied terraces lead into the surrounding grounds, and scalloped balconies adorn every window. The entire palace looks as if it has been hewn from a single huge piece of emerald crystal, carved with delicate filigree, and lightly marbled. The grounds feature many fountains, statues and footpaths, the entirety of which is surrounded by a great wall, massive wrought-iron gate, and extensive patrols by veteran swordsmen in ceremonial armor.

Militray Bases

The Citadel

This 50-foot high single-tower fortress of green stone adjoins directly to the SE wall's sentinel tower. Full barracks, training grounds and stabling facilities are located at its base, providing

facilities for over two thousand Thrall, Blue Aeriad and Cymrilian mercenaries. It also serves as the headquarters for the City Watch. Two walls, forming triangular grounds, enclose the entire complex.

Sentinel Towers

These three-story round towers, each 50-foot high, are constructed of the same stone as the city's outer walls. Each houses a pair of Arimite fire-thrower siege weapons, 20 artilleryists, and 30 thrall heavy cavalry, who often patrol the outlying roads. Mangonel lizards are stabled in underground bunkers at the tower's base.

Watch Stations

Each of Cymril's six sectors has one of these two-story outposts, housing that sector's Watch contingent. The stout towers are constructed of thick, dark opaque crystal, and provide offices for the Watch captains and investigators.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

College of Law

Located adjacent to the Halls of Justice the College of Law resembles a scaled down version its neighbor, standing a mere one story high, and is only half the length and width. It serves as a university and guildhouse for arbitrators and legislators, many of which are available for hire at costs of 50 g.l. per day or more. A mere 40 students are enrolled here each year for a legal course that takes two years, and costs 400 g.l.

Lyceum Arcanum

This famed institution consists entirely of verdant crystal and stands 40-foot high, with a clashing array of pillars around its circumference. Two great iron portals allow entrance, although they are extensively warded and guarded. Talislanta's premier institute of arcane studies, the Lyceum Arcanum contains numerous classrooms and laboratories, workshops, archives and vaults, as well as lecturer accommodation. Three upper levels house the accommodation, classrooms and lecture halls, while two subterranean levels house laboratories and vaults. The Lyceum offers

classes in every known magical field except for Diabolism or Demonology Invocations, as well as classes on esoteric lore, and performs research and experimentation at the behest of Cymril's government. Tuition costs 500 g.l. per septemester (seven weeks), or 50 g.l. for Cymrilian citizens. Entrance requirements are strict.

MUSEUMS & LIBRARIES

Museum of Antiquities

This structure of jade crystal stands 36-foot high and is one of the oldest in the city. Vast carved pillars surround the entire building, and large double doors permit entrance. The interior consists of three-levels containing exhibition halls filled with countless cases displaying antique artifacts, many of which date back to the Forgotten Age, including items from the ancient civilizations of Elande, Pompados, Sharna, Phandril, Xambria and Quaran. Needless to say, all the exhibits are heavily warded and extensively guarded. Several subterranean levels house artifacts that are being repaired, identified, or are too fragile or dangerous to display.

The Library of Cymril

An adjunct of the Lyceum Arcanum, this 60-foot high, 60-foot diameter circular tower of lime crystal consists of nine floors, three of which are located below ground. Each level is reached by a central spiral staircase, and lined with row upon row of high shelves, with thousands of tablets, scrolls, and books, covering nearly every conceivable subject. While all the items are extensively catalogued, it can still take many days to track down a specific tome. Dangerous tomes are kept in a warded vault, and permission must be given by the Lyceum Arcanum to access them. Research materials may not be removed from the library without special permission.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Cathedral of the Magister

Soft colored lights glow within the green crystal walls of this imposing temple. Standing 35-foot in height, and built like a seven-pointed star, each point is a hall of pews spaced evenly around a

large central hall containing a circular rostrum and pulpit. Carved runes of magical significance adorn every surface.

Repose of the Ten Thousand

See DENS OF INIQUITY

Terra's Grotto

A gentle slope of rich, dark soil descends into a womb-like cavern. A scattering of natural crystals glow in the shade, providing warm illumination. A small sinuous tunnel links this cavern to the Gnomekin Market.

The Righteous Tower of Aa

A small fortress-like tower of bleached white stone topped with a great carved eye. Harsh angles predominate, and the interior is spartan, save for a large unblinking eye carved into the wall opposite the entrance.

MARKET'S & BAZAARS


The Bazaar

The Bazaar is a huge open-air market frequented by traders from all over the Seven Kingdoms and beyond, and is open from sun-up to sundown every day of the year. Stalls bearing every conceivable product (and more than a few that aren't) can be found here. Hagglng is lively, and many citizens spend at least a few hours here every week purchasing various groceries and knick-knacks. Watch patrols are commonplace around the market, but it still pays to be wary of the inevitable pickpockets and charlatans.

The Bazaar also serves as the site of Cymril's annual Magical Fair: a two week long pageant starting on the 1st of Phandir, celebrating the founding of the free kingdom of Cymril.

Gnomekin Market

Located directly under the Bazaar, the Gnomekin Market is a large cavern complex, lit with numerous glowing crystals, and dealing exclusively in Gnomekin produce. Vast tunnels lead off along the Underground Highway. Prices here are always fair. As such, it is considered offensive to try and haggle



with the Gnomekin merchants. A single small tunnel connects directly with Terra's Grotto.

TRADERS, ARTISANS & MERCHANTS

Amberglass Bounty

An adjunct of the Lyceum Arcanum, this unadorned, warehouse-like structure of vibrant orange crystal deals in all sorts of magical and alchemical supplies, which it purchases in bulk. Animal, vegetable and mineral ingredients abound, as do common magical and alchemical mixtures, parchments, writing paraphernalia, alchemical apparatuses, and various crystal containers. Prices remain average despite the bulk purchasing, due to high demand.

Blade Haven Armory

This shop features a sign consisting of two swords, welded together on an iron shield. This shop and forge deals in weapons and armor of all varieties, and is run by a Thrall Smith, and Cymrilian Swordsmage. Common weapons and armor of good quality are plentiful. Items can be forged of black, red or blue iron. In addition, items can be decorated with scrollwork, filigree or enamel for a reasonable fee (50% plus of the item's value, depending on detail, size, and materials involved).

Cartographica

Located right next to the wind-docks, Cartographica is the best archive of maps on the continent. Hundreds of maps are piled on row upon row of dusty shelves in no discernable order. The owner is a Sindaran with a passion for maps and has been dealing in them for decades.

Gears and Mechanisms

This shop is composed of blue rutilated crystal, and a small clockwork automaton above the door, proclaims "Gears and Mechanisms!" every 30 seconds in a tinny voice. This workshop contains an automated forge run by a pair of Yassan technomancers, and numerous mechanical marvels are proudly displayed, including clockwork

children's toys, useful tools and gadgets, and even basic prosthetic limbs. Costs are high, and custom pieces can be made on demand given sufficient notice.

The Hookah

This small, hole-in-the-wall shop features a large hookah above the doorway, which billows scented, colored fumes on a continuous basis. It specializes in selling soft recreational drugs—the most popular of which is Draiva's Dreamy Smoking Tobacco—and alchemical enhancements such as pigment or glitter powder.

Kolmirana's

This small, turquoise crystal pawnshop specializes in magical items and trinkets. Kolmirana is an obese female Cymrilian with silver skin, turquoise eyes and long gold hair, usually dressed in bejewelled satin robes. It is rumored that she is a fence, and the head of a city-wide underworld ring.

Lock and Key

This stout windowless structure of thick, opaque purple crystal, features a massive iron padlock set above a sturdy iron door which is literally riddled with keyholes. Housed within sturdy, locked and trapped display cases are numerous fiendish traps and locks, all for sale. In addition, keys, traps and locks can be made to order by the Kasmiran owner, who also offers a lock-opening service for those individuals who lose their keys (25 g.l.).

Metamorphosis

This salon consists of a small, faintly glowing twisted, two-story tower of marbled black crystal. Run by the famed Darual the Morphosite (who constantly alters his entire appearance and even gender, in bizarre ways), this establishment employs the latest magical enhancements to change skin and hair color, mold facial features, lacquer and shape hair, disguise gender and age, etc. It is currently in vogue to allow Darual to "do his own thing" with a makeover, and the results are often astounding. Wealthy clients from Cymril, Hadjistan and Zandu make frequent visits. Costs range from 100 - 1,000 g.l.

Mortar and Pestle

This reputable establishment offers powders, potions and other alchemical mixtures of good quality at reasonable rates, and also offers to analyze unknown mixtures at a cost of 10 g.l. The exterior of the shop has been coated with a glittering umber alchemical, and the interior is draped with orange silk, as appeals to the Sindaran proprietor.

Myrmidian's Messages

This establishment is one of many that provides a messaging service unique to Cymril. A message written on origami parchment (see sidebar) is placed within a magical sphere, the size of two fists, and then told a name and address within Cymril. The ball will roll to that address, and then repeat the name of the person in a high-pitched voice until someone acknowledges they are that person. The service costs 3 g.l. per message, plus the cost of origami parchment if necessary.

Serazzio's

This slender, tapering three-story tower is composed of rose crystal, shot through with swirls of various colors. It is the best tailoring facility in the Seven Kingdoms, dealing in all manner of exotic costumes, both antique and modern, and will custom-make clothing to order. Every cloth known across the continent can be found here.

Sigil

Sigil is a curiosity shop of the highest order, its ramshackle shelves literally brimming with odd knick-knacks, strange paraphernalia, and weird artifacts. It is widely rumored that nearly anything can be found here if someone spends enough time digging through the uncatalogued mess, from Khazad sarcophagi to old stuffed dolls, from pickled body parts to magical artifacts of unusual power or unknown purpose. Sigils are carved in bas-relief on every available surface, both inside and out.

Tazian Tattoos

This small parlor displays a hanging sign of a colorful thrall, and features boards displaying innumerable artistic designs, any of which can

be tattooed. While an aged thrall does work here, the parlor's best tattoo artist is a female Sarista, whose works are said to be truly breathtaking and vivid. Prices range from 1 g.l. for a small, simple, monochrome tattoo, to several hundred g.l. for large, vivid, colorful tattoos that use magical pigments.

Wilderlands Expeditionary

This immense warehouse and stable complex offers mounts, dray beasts, wagons, and equipment such as ropes, tents, foul-weather clothing, and even small skiffs, at reasonable prices for average to good quality.

PARKS

Cymril's many parks are favored places of relaxation on fine days, and are especially popular among home-sick ex-patriots. Needless to say, they are also popular with courting couples... and individuals of a voyeuristic nature.

Cymril Park

Green crystal tile paths weave amid a rainbow of colors - the flowers, bushes and trees perfectly sculpted from multi-hued glass. An inspiring statue occupies the center of the park, cut from emerald glass, celebrating Pharos, the first Wizard King of Cymril.

Durne Park

Shadowed cavern mouths lead into a network of grottoes and tunnels. Clusters of mushrooms glow with soft purple phosphorescence, reflecting in the sweeping gardens of amber crystal formations. A life-size statute of warm amber depicts Sabo Orabio, the Gnome-King who lead his people to victory over the Darkling hordes of Urag.

Astar Park

Lush fields of grass cloaked with rainbow-hued wildflowers border a crystal-clear pond, recreating Lake Zephyr on a smaller scale. Copses of supple willow line the banks, dipping their leaves into the waters. A statue of a beautiful, but long forgotten, male Muse stands in the middle of the pond, carved from lavender-blue stone and entwined



with flowers.

Kasmir Park

A windowless stone tower stands surrounded by undulating dunes of golden sand. Stout and strong, it contains the great gold statue of Abn Kadan, the wealthiest merchant in Kasmiran history. Few have ever seen it, for it is under lock and key, warded by devious trap mechanisms. The key is held by the senior Kasmiran councillor.

Sindar Park

Dusty paths wind sinuously between 15-foot high mesas and rugged spires of sandstone and basalt. A 14-foot statue of dark basalt represents Nadir Salu, master collector and inventor of Trivarian.

Taz Park

A tall, thick wall of clear toughened glass surrounds Taz Park, serving to prevent any of the dangerous fauna from escaping into the city. A single entrance with a double gate of iron is warded to prevent unintelligent beasts passing it, and guarded by a pair of veteran Thralls. At the heart of this miniature jungle is a lacquered iron statue of Mace, legendary Thrall commander and hero of the Beast Wars.

Given Taz Park's dangerous flora and fauna, it is widely avoided by all but the brave and foolhardy, and as such only Thralls frequent it with any regularity. However, a small group of jaded thrill-seekers have also been known to frequent the park, although a number have never returned.

Vardune Park

Greenery is in abundance across terraced gardens, and grassy embankments smothered in flowers. Copses of trees form shaded archways over the elevated walkways of woven vines that connect above the central garden. A huge viridia tree stands there in perpetual bloom, carefully tended over centuries to resemble the great Botanomancer, Viridian.

INNS, TAVERNS & RESTAURANTS

Cymril's various inns, taverns and restaurants are

said to be among the most diverse on the continent, although the risk of attack by a magically animated meal is vastly overstated.

The Eyrie

As tall as a four-story building, this inn is actually a single large hall of sky-blue crystal, the interior of which features numerous hanging hammocks, platforms, tables, and elevated walkways of woven living vines, at various levels. Catering exclusively to Aeriad, the cuisine, décor and communal accommodation seldom appeal to other visitors.

Four-Winds Tavern

Located adjacent to the wind-docks, the Four-Winds tavern and inn is actually the converted shell of an old windship, complete with a mast sporting a billowing sail of silver silk. The lower-hold has been converted into a large, well-appointed bar, the upper hold into a number of small, moderately furnished rooms, and the upper deck is used as a terrace. The clientele is composed almost entirely of dockworkers and windship crews.

The Greatsword

A blunt greatsword hangs from chains above the double doors that enter this spartan, militaristic tavern and inn that caters to professional warriors of all sorts, especially Thralls. The décor is tough and utilitarian, the food is hearty, and the drink is strong. Ample stable facilities are provided, and the rooms are comfortable, if sparsely furnished.

The Iridescent Pentacle

This five-sided inn and tavern is constructed from blocks of enchanted crystal that shimmer with every color imaginable. Catering primarily to magicians and other spellcasters, this establishment features large glyph-covered pillars that prohibit all but minor spells. Private booths, a large common room, and rooftop terrace provide substantial seating, and the accommodation, service, food and drink are first-class in all regards.

The Nook

Located in the Gnomekin Market, the Nook is a subterranean tavern and inn, furnished in true Gnomekin style. Rough-hewn caves lined

with spongy moss and lit with softly-glowing crystals serve as accommodation, and a large central cavern serves as a common room and bar, providing Gnomekin fare. While crafted at larger than Gnomekin dimensions, most humans find it slightly cramped, although the prices are fair.

The Shifting Sands

This sprawling tent complex serves as an inn and tavern catering primarily to travelers from the desert kingdoms of Kasmir, Djaffa and Carantheum. Rooms feature scatter cushions of fine silks, and exotic dancers form the entertainment. Mocha is the drink of choice, and honeyed dates are a speciality. Hot tubs are provided for a modest fee, and there is extensive stabling for mounts, wagons and drays.

The Pacific Pavilion for Conjecture and Conviviality

Commonly known as the Sindar Pavilion, this inn and tavern is frequented by scholars, antiquarians and curio-dealers of all varieties, including Sindarans. A large complex of wooden platforms, and an intricate framework of wooden poles, support orange and sienna colored cloth walls of alchemically treated fabrics. Furnishings are of smoothly polished woods, and the cuisine and entertainment (including trivarian) are decidedly Sindaran.

The Wretched Urthrax

This dimly lit tavern is filled with the haze of smoke, and stench of cheap beer. By far the most dangerous establishment in Cymril, it is frequented by ne'er-do-wells of every stripe, from hard-bitten mercenaries, to thieves and other assorted riff-raff. Needless to say, the City Watch take a keen interest in the patrons, although only the desperate take any interest in the cuisine.

DENS OF INIQUITY

Amorosa

A lavish, almost palatial structure, Amorosa is decorated with many tasteful erotic friezes carved into its walls, both inside and out. The furnishings and rooms are on the decadent side of opulent,

and this establishment offers all manner of erotic diversions for males and females of many races, albeit at near extortionate prices.

Chances

This subdued establishment is easily overlooked, save for the large, glowing crystal pentadrille piece that hangs above the doorway. The interior of this casino is tastefully decorated, and security is strict. Various sums are wagered on games of pentadrille, quadrillion, trivarian, and zodar, with in-house spellcasters and observers ensuring that any cheating, magical or otherwise, is minimized.

Chicanery


A radiant magical hologram floats in the air above the twin, carved circular portals of this emporium, proclaiming "Chicanery". This establishment offers the experience of superbly crafted illusory realities of whatever the client desires, from highly unlikely sexual encounters, to virtual battlegrounds, or travel through bizarre or non-existent landscapes. Prices range from 50 g.l., to well in excess of 10,000 g.l. depending on complexity and duration.

Eidolon

This unremarkable building bears no signs or decoration, and the stout door remains closed at all times. A private club providing a comfortable, social atmosphere for its members, Eidolon offers numerous drugs to its clientele, although it deals primarily in euphorica. Only those who are on the registered list of members are allowed entrance, and security, both in the form of traps, guards, and magical wards, is excessive. Membership is by invite only.

Magique

The most popular of Cymril's nightspots, Magique is a large, six-story club, topped with a spiral-carved dome. Carved all over with intricate runes, the hues of color within the club's walls shift continuously. The clientele are generally young, affluent and fashion-conscious. Numerous musicians of various nationalities provide entertainment throughout the building, accompanied by illusory light shows. Scattered tables and seats surround each story's



dance floor, and intoxicants of all varieties, from alcohol to mild drugs, are available at the bars. Admission is 10 g.l. and any trouble is swiftly dealt with by the veteran Thrall bouncers.

Repose of the Ten Thousand

This building consists of a cluster of narrow towers, each linked to the other and topped with a pointed dome. Innumerable life-size figures of Zandu's Ten Thousand saints are carved in bas-relief on the outside walls. This temple offers the "enlightenments of Zandir Paradoxy", primarily in the form of excessive intoxicants, sexual dalliances, spicy food, dance, and musical entertainment.

Zephyr

A large lilac dome covers this nympharium, the interior of which is a sylvan glade, complete with trees, pools, and flower-covered carpets of grass. While the dome is opaque from the exterior, the roof is completely clear from the interior. Visitors are immersed in Muse culture, engaging in various sensual pursuits with the male and female Muses, enjoying telepathic projection shows, musical performances, and partaking of the subtle and delicate Muse cuisine. Admittance costs 30 g.l.

TRANSPORTATION

Wind-Docks

The government-controlled wind-docks consist of four large construction and repair warehouses, a seven-story office tower of opaque green, and the wind-dock itself: a 250-foot high tower of rutilated rainbow crystal. The wind-dock sprouts branch-like docking platforms at regular intervals throughout its height and circumference, lending it the appearance of a bizarre tree when numerous windships and windriggers are docked. Six large magical disks at the heart of the tower serve to raise and lower cargo, crew and passengers as they arrive or disembark.

The Wind-Docks were originally owned by the Four Winds Trade and Travel Company, but they were brought out by the Cymrilian government following the Farad-Rajan incident. The Cymrilian government has assumed control of all windship

production and docking facilities, thereby maintaining tighter control over the arcanology and its secrets.

Cymril's windships are the quickest, but most expensive way to traverse the continent. Common port-of-call include Zanth, Dracarta, Hadj, Hadran, Danuvia, Nankar, Vashay, Tor and Kasmir. Less frequent trips include Aamahd, Al Ashad, Tarun and Caprica; most other places will require a chartered ship to go to. Cymrilian windships never go to some places for varying reasons. These include mountainous Arim; the weather of L'Haan is too severe; the airspace of the Kang Empire beyond Hadran is forbidden and Raj is a hostile nation.

Traveling on a windship is a rough experience. Quarters are cramped, food is poor, the weather is often harsh, and sickness is common; much like a seagoing vessel. Attacks from aerial creatures such as wind demons and ravengers and the occasional bout of aberrant weather also pose a danger.

Ruby Lightning Coaches

Cymril's most famous coach company, Ruby Lightning Coaches are recognizable by their luxuriant decor. Rich, colorful hardwoods are beautifully carved in the likeness of nymphs, and embellished with artful paints, and the interior of each equus-drawn coach is covered with lush, crimson velvet. They have several dozen coaches running at all times of the day and night, waiting at all of Cymril's major nightspots and tourist attractions. A single journey to any location in Cymril, costs 5 s.p. per person, and each coach can accommodate 4 passengers. The company is run by a committee of coach drivers, and a few equus representatives.

MISCELLANEOUS

Arcanum Society

This simple and austere three-story pyramid in classic emerald houses the Arcanum Society: a private club that includes many lecturers at the Lyceum Arcanum, as well as esteemed wizards and archimages of various nations and nationalities. Admission and membership are by invite and

majority vote only, following a strict interview process. The club is open to either gender, and maintains a comfortable common room, superb observatory, and excellent library of magical writings.

Cymril Mausoleum

This 250-foot edifice of glaucous crystal is the final resting-place of many Cymrilians. Those who can afford it are encased in glass, and displayed in one of the mausoleum's many cubicles. This costs at least 2,000 g.l. ranging up to 20,000 g.l. depending on the quality, color, and opacity of the crystal used. The majority of Cymril's deceased are thrown into the Void at the Sanitation Center following a brief ceremony.

Sanitation Center

This large oval building of opaque white crystal houses the city's waste disposal and cleansing services. A large central hall contains a heavily warded portal to the Void through which all Cymril's waste produce and garbage is disposed. In addition, numerous secluded funerary rooms are located adjacent to this, performing the necessary rites for Cymril's departed, before the body is lowered into the Void.

Tazian Arena

This enclosed 50-foot diameter arena of crimson crystal features three tiers of benches, and can hold several hundred spectators. The weapons used are blunted or padded, reducing the chance of mortal injuries by a significant degree. Bouts are fought every evening, and admission is 1 g.l. Wagering is brisk.

The Vault

This windowless stone tower serves as a moneylender's and bank, run by several Kasmiran associates. Security is perhaps the strictest in all of Cymril, with many hidden traps, spy-tubes, and numerous iron doors. Foreign currency can be exchanged here for a 10% surcharge, and loans can be applied for with a minimum 30% interest rate. In addition, money and valuables can be deposited for safekeeping for a fee of 5% per month.

NOTBALE CITIZENS

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, encounters, or rivals (friendly or otherwise):

Casselle - Acolyte of the Magister

Casselle is fashionable and gregarious; she is also a devoted acolyte of the Magister (Cymril's concept of the Creator). A skilled magician, she affects a white and damask marbled semblance.

Abo Enabia - Daughter of Terra and Inn

Keep

Priestess of Terra's Grotto, proprietor of The Nook, and mother of 12, this beautiful, middle-aged Gnomekin always has time for those in need, regardless of race or creed.

Dragonnade - Rogue Cymrilian

Pyromancer

Affecting a vaguely reptilian appearance, with green scales, red eyes, and red hair shaped into a crest, Dragonnade is also a thief and professional assassin, specializing in arson. He is by turns hot-tempered and cold-blooded.

Siddig Fadeel - Sindaran Watch

Investigator

This agreeable Watch Investigator also creates healing elixirs in his spare time, and collects medical paraphernalia. He secretly admires those criminals audacious enough to try and outwit him.

Aaslan - Aamanian Witch-Hunter

Dour, mysterious and imposing, Aaslan is in charge of security at The Righteous Tower of Aa. He has a somewhat sinister and nefarious reputation among Cymril's citizenry.

Davallia - Muse Entertainer

This lilac-winged and beautiful, if absent-minded, Muse works in the Zephyr nymphaeum, and is guarded by a wood whisp named Migg who fancies himself a great warrior, and states he is "a giant among wood whisps!"

Talis - Lecturer at the Lyceum Arcanum

Talis is Department Head of Natural Magical Studies at the Lyceum, and is approaching 40 years of age. He affects a semblance reminiscent of earth, with grass-like hair. He is often found meditating in any of Cymril's parks.

Ka-Ree - Blue Aeriad Scout

Ka-Ree is a young, highly-strung member of Cymril's legion. She is often reprimanded for leaping off public buildings, and spends her off-hours in The Eyrie. She fights with a dart-thrower in each hand.

Tempestus - Veteran Marine

Tempestus is a veteran Swordmage and aeromancer, more at home aboard a windship than on the ground. This gruff and friendly marine has ashen hair, silver skin, a sword that glows like lightning, and clothes that roil with dark clouds.

The Awesome Axe - Thrall Gladiator

This heavily scarred, peg-legged Thrall is the current champion of the Tazian Arena. A specialist in Tazian combat and wrestling, he was forced to leave the military when he lost his left leg below the knee.

Azi al Din - Kasmir Trapsmage and aspiring burglar

This young, highly adept Kasmir runs the highly successful Lock & Key establishment. Sociable and excitable for a member of her culture, she has romantic dreams about becoming a notorious burglar.

Jaelistian - Hellacious Cymrilian Student

Jaelistian (Jael to his friends) is a student at the Lyceum, studying wizardry with a strong emphasis on illusion-craft. He is also a notorious practical joker and rogue. His appearance is angelic, with gold skin, sapphire eyes, glowing white hair and robes.

Savrille - Pharesian Peddler

Savrille is approaching his fiftieth year of life, and has seen more of Talislanta than most could hope to see in a lifetime. World-weary and wise, he is semi-retired, often spending his evenings spinning tales in various taverns.

Maralico - Associate of the Arcanum Society

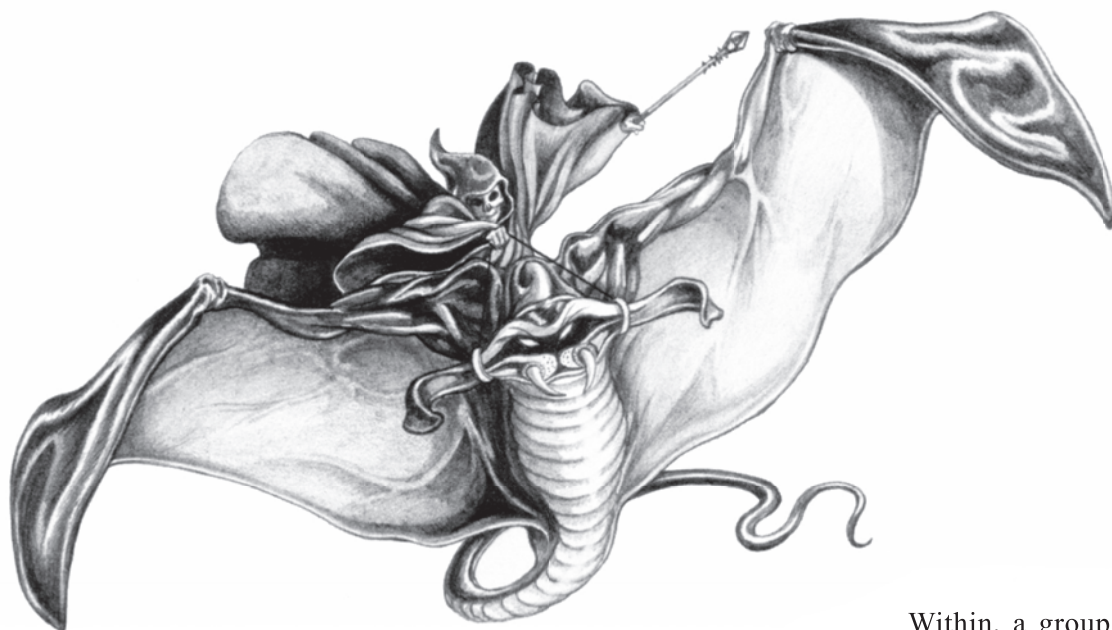
One of the Society's youngest members, Maralico is the daughter of a Cymrilian Swordmage and Zandir Duelist. Born and raised in Cymril, this softly-spoken Aeromancer is one of the continent's acknowledged experts on avian fauna.

THE SHADOW REALM

At the northernmost edge of the Wilderlands lies the Shadow Realm, an eerie place haunted by the ghosts of a dozen vanished civilizations. The landscape is correspondingly unpleasant, and consists largely of broken hills, outcroppings of wind-blasted rock, and thickets of stunted tanglewood and thornwood. Shattered ruins, worn beyond recognition by centuries of time, are found throughout the region.

Among the few intelligent beings known to inhabit this forlorn land are Shadow Wizards, spectral entities who hail from the Nightmare Dimension. Comprised of animate darkness, these frightful entities cloak themselves in hooded vestments and bear ebony rune staves studded with crystals of black diamond. Like shadow wights, their eyes burn with a fiery incandescence, and they are insubstantial to the touch.

The Shadow Wizards dwell within the Iron Citadel, a ruined structure of ancient and obscure origins. Its towers have eyes of carved obsidian, which constantly scan the surrounding environs, alert for any intruders who would dare to venture into the Shadow Realm. From within the dark confines of their sanctum, the Shadow Wizards reputedly



consort
with creatures from the lower planes, such as phantasms, bat mantas, and void monsters.

Because the Shadow Wizards of this region are reclusive by nature, very little is known of their motives. The intrepid sorcerer Kabros claimed to have visited the Shadow Realm on at least one occasion. In Volume Six of his famous "Guide to the Lower Planes," there appears a brief monograph on the subject, recounted here in part:

I approached the Iron Citadel, heedless of the obsidian orbs which stared at me from the castle's black metal towers. Twin portals of solid iron, each engraved with weird runes and sigils and standing over twenty feet in height, opened slowly as I drew near. A foul wind issued forth, cold and unnatural, as if originating from another world. Summoning the remainder of my resolve, I entered into darkness.

For a time, I groped about blindly, fearing lest I should stumble into some unseen pit or other obstacle. At last my eyes adjusted to the gloom, and I could discern the vague outlines of a long, winding stairway. I ascended and, after a seemingly interminable period of time, emerged into a vast and eerie chamber.

Within, a group of shadowy figures stood occupied at various tasks, apparently oblivious to my presence. Several worked at long tables piled high with tangles of alchemical equipment and tubing, distilling some sort of dark, viscous liquid; others fed malformed imps to caged bat manta, attended steaming vats and cauldrons, or conversed in hushed whispers with winged phantasms. With a pair of tongs, one of the Shadow Wizards brought forth a small creature from the largest of the vats: a hideous humanoid with a bloated head, covered with barbs, horns and sharp protrusions.

An icy terror gripped my soul at the sight of this thing, freshly fashioned from the stuff of which nightmares are made. My mind reeled: this was Fear itself, given tangible form and substance by the black arts of the Shadow Wizards. I fled, unable to bear the scrutiny of those dark eyes, and anxious only to return to the world of light and reason..."

The few brave souls who dare to trespass into this region generally come here to obtain Sardonicus (also known as "bottle-imps"), diminutive devils which can sometimes be found lurking about the ruins scattered across this region. Much favored by spell casters, who find them to be useful familiars and companions, Sardonicus can command prices of more than a thousand gold lumens apiece.

Demons of all sorts consider them especially tasty, a fact which prospective bottle-imp trappers would do well to keep in mind.

SILVANUS

Silvanus is a hilly woodland region located to the west of the Necros River and the Forests of Werewood. Unlike the dreary and fell territories of its eastern neighbor, the wooded glens of Silvanus are scenic and relatively tranquil. Here, fields of meadow grass offer respite from the forest, and cool streams converge amidst thickets of silver-beec, carpets of moss, and quiet ponds.

Among the few folk known to frequent this region are the Sarista, a nomadic race of indistinct origin. They are built along slender proportions and have skin the color of rich topaz, dark eyes and jet

black hair. The Sarista are partial to such forms of ornamentation as ear bangles, facial tattooing, and all types of gaudy raiment. The men sport colorful capes, berets, tight-fitting hose, sashes and high boots; the women: all manner of sultry and seductive attire, also of a colorful nature.

The Sarista are a people of diverse qualities. Some are loners who make their living as peddlers, mercenaries or vagabonds. Others, notable for their skill at witchcraft, live in secluded wilderness regions. The majority of these folk are more gregarious in nature, and prefer to travel in loose-knit tribal groups, carrying all that they own in wagons or on the backs of burden beasts. Their caravans roam the western lands from Silvanus to the Seven Kingdoms, stopping in cities and villages along the way. In such places, the Sarista are renowned for their talents as folk healers, fortune tellers and performers -- or as mountebanks, charlatans and tricksters, depending



upon one's point of view.

The discrepancy of opinion regarding the Sarista may be attributed to their mysterious customs, traditions, and history. The Sarista have their own language, a version of the common Talislan tongue which allows the speaker to convey hidden meanings by the use of subtle gestures and inflections. The tribes do not keep written records of any sort, but rely upon the elder Sarista to raise the tribe's offspring and teach them the secret lore of their people. These studies consist primarily of minor magics, herb lore, local geography and "Sarista culture"; a euphemism held to be roughly equivalent to the less flattering term, "thievery". By age seven, a Sarista child will know every woodland trail in Silvanus by heart, and will have an alarmingly comprehensive understanding of "Sarista culture."

The history of the Sarista tribes consists of a baffling collection of anecdotes, fables and lewd ballads, and has long puzzled scholars. Some believe them to be a people displaced during the time of the Great Disaster; others, citing as evidence the Sarista's propensity for kleptomania, categorize them as the descendants of the countless bandit tribes who once roamed Talislanta in ancient times.

The Sarista religion is similarly mystifying, and revolves around two obscure demi-gods: Fortuna, lovely but fickle goddess of luck, and the grim entity known as Death. The Sarista revere Fortuna, but mock Death, whom they strive to cheat at every opportunity.

The woods of Silvanus are also home to wood whisps, muskront, and other creatures, most of the benign sort. Roots and herbs, many having magical or healing properties, are quite common. Two plants of particular note are found here: whisperweed (which often tells the most astonishing secrets to those patient enough to listen) and needleleaf, an obnoxious, needle-throwing succulent. Though exomorphs and banes from nearby Werewood sometimes infiltrate Silvanus, the greatest danger in this region is posed by wind demons, giant winged carnivores of foul

temperament.

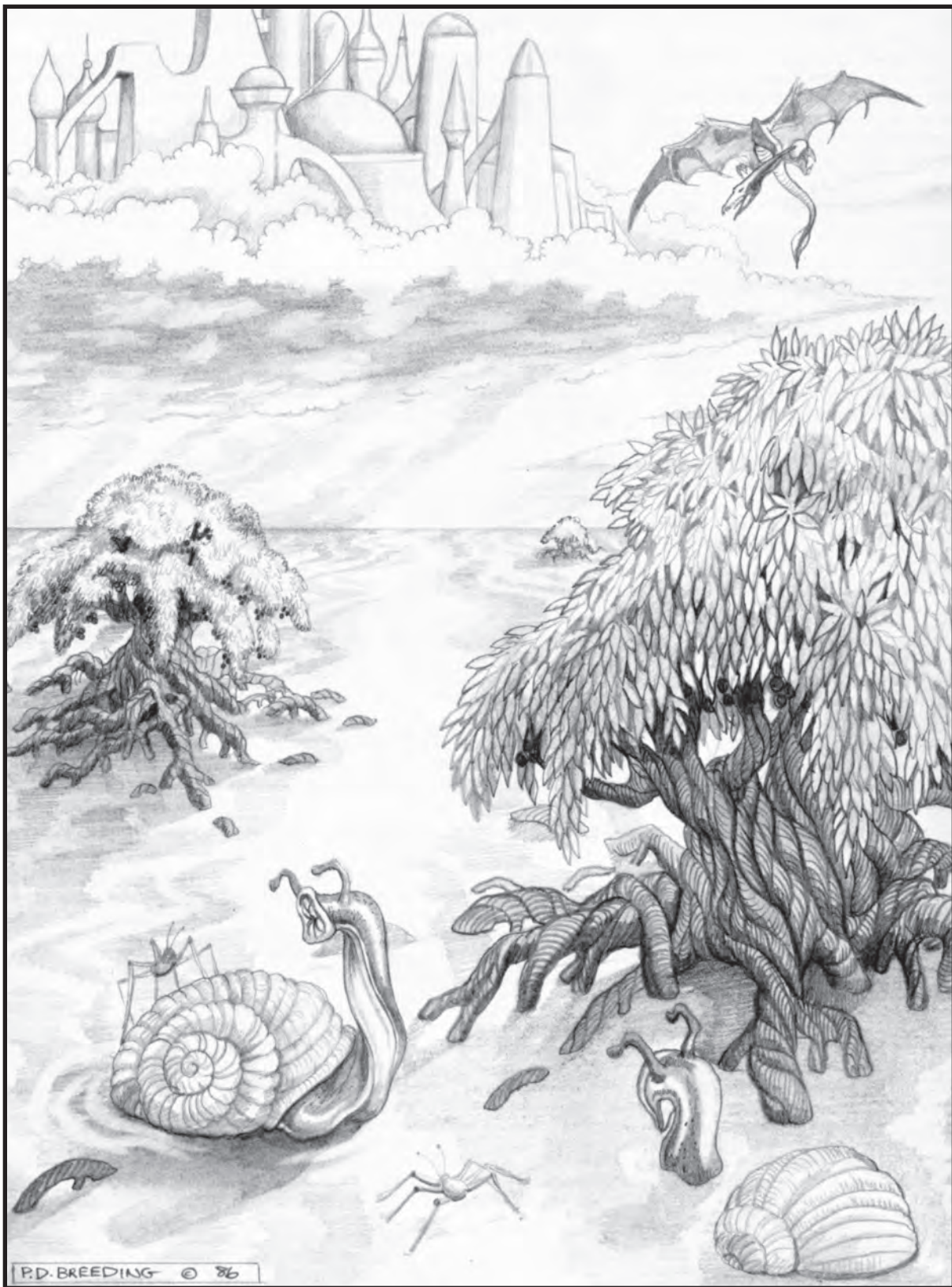
In the company of the rogue magician Crystabal, who was himself part Sarista, I traveled through this wooded region en route to an adventure in the land of Khazad. We stayed for an evening with a Sarista band, who entertained us with their traditional songs and dances. The local cuisine, served with generous flagons of herb-spiced wine, was quite excellent. Afterward, playful Sarista children gathered around, sitting on my lap and giving me gifts of little bouquets of meadow flowers.

At last it came time to put the little ones to bed, though none would go without first giving "old Uncle Tamerlin" (as they insisted upon calling me) a hug. With wide grins, the elder Sarista then brought forth more wine. I listened to a few tall tales told around the campfire before myself retiring. Crystabal, flirting with a charming Sarista girl, attempted to arrange a romantic interlude.

I awoke at daybreak feeling refreshed and well-rested. A slightly bleary-eyed Crystabal joined me after a time, and the two of us saddled up our greymanes and bid farewell to the Sarista. Not five miles down the road I discovered, much to my chagrin, that the contents of my pockets had been picked clean. Muttering under my breath, I cursed the little urchins who had sat upon my lap and showered me with hugs and kisses. Crystabal laughed long and loudly, until he discovered that his purse of gold coins was missing, among other items. With an ill-concealed grin, I consoled him, and we continued on our way.

THE SINKING LAND

The Sinking Land (also known as "The Great Morass") is situated in the furthest northeastern reaches of the Wilderlands of Zaran, just west of the Volcanic Hills and south of the Opal Mountains. The skies above this region are ever dark and grey; the earth below, a vast quagmire of inert, brown sludge. Passage through the Sinking Land is deemed next to impossible, the muddy



terrain having a tendency to slowly swallow up creatures or beings who remain stationary for more than a few minutes' time.

A few species of plants and animals have somehow managed to adapt to this bleak and depressing environment, including several varieties of giant fungi, the mud-dwelling snipe and the flat-rooted barge tree. The snipe is an intelligent species of mollusk which possesses the ability to move swiftly through the muddy ground of the Sinking Land as easily as fish swim through water. They are insatiably curious creatures, always eager to exchange bits of news and gossip with other sentient life forms. Adventurers who claim to have explored the Sinking Land cite the barge tree as being a great boon to travelers, who can take their rest in the wide, low-lying branches of this peculiar tree in relative security. As barge trees are not securely rooted, they do tend to drift about to some extent, but this is generally only a minor inconvenience. The barge tree also bears a most edible and nutritious fruit, though precautions against parasitic Ikshada are, to say the least, advisable. Also found here are the winged reptilians known as Azoryls, and the Ironshrike, a metallic-plumed bird which feeds on Ikshada.

It is perhaps possible that no reasonable person would care to enter the Sinking Land were it not for the legends concerning the City of the Four Winds. Once known as the capital of the ancient kingdom of Elande, the City of the Four Winds is believed to be the last surviving vestige of an advanced and enlightened civilization. It was built by the greatest magicians of Elande's Golden Age, who invested the city with magical properties, allowing its buildings to hover suspended above the ground. According to legend, the city survived the Great Disaster, and still floats somewhere above the Sinking Land, moving slowly on the winds. Travelers who claim to have caught a glimpse of the fabled city describe it as being most enchanting, its wind-worn towers and archways still capable of conjuring up visions of the halcyon age of Elande. The sorcerer Kabros sought and claimed to have found the Lost City. Of his discovery he would only say: "The city of the Four Winds must be believed in order to be seen, and seen in order to

be believed."

What riches lie within the City of the Four Winds can only be surmised. Legends hint at the existence of hidden treasure caches containing arcane scrolls, jeweled amulets, and magical talismans. One account puts forth the theory that Elande's artisans created six rare and scintillant colors which never before existed. Another states that Elande's magicians, upon learning that their civilization was doomed to perish in the Great Disaster, imbued a number of "soulstones" with their life essences and memories. It is believed by certain optimistic individuals that anyone who gains possession of one of the soulstones of Elande will acquire all the knowledge of the great magician who created it.

Abandoned for untold centuries, the City of the Four Winds, if it does still exist, may not be entirely devoid of inhabitants. Though it is quite doubtful that any of the Elande or their descendants still live within the floating city, other creatures or beings might conceivably be found to dwell here. Wind demons, shadow wights, and Necrophages come to mind as possible candidates for residency, among other, more imaginative choices.

TAMARANTH

Tamaranth is the eldest and most impressive of Talisanta's woodland regions. Light vegetation and thickets of low-lying trees dominate the perimeters, progressing in stages towards the ever deepening woods of the interior. Here, giant span-oak and fernwood tower above the forest floor, thick with carpets of moss and trailing vines. Swift running streams course through the underbrush, and the woods teem with an abundance of plant and animal life. Two intelligent species of humanoids also live here: the avian Gryphs, and the reclusive Ariane.

Originally the first inhabitants of Tamaranth, the Gryphs are a race of intelligent, winged beings. Standing up to seven feet tall with wingspans in excess of twenty-four feet, they are quite



impressive to behold. Their bodies are covered with a thick, feathery down (usually a brilliant red or orange in color), and they have hawk-like visages and bright, piercing eyes.


Like the birds of prey they resemble, Gryphs are hunters by nature. They have exceptionally keen vision, which enables them to spot even the slightest movement on the ground from great altitudes. The Gryph clans subsist primarily on fresh game, typically large predators and other dangerous beasts. They are skilled in the use of a type of two-pronged spear called the *duar* and the heavy crossbow, utilizing either sharp or blunt quarrels.

The Gryph clans live in eyries built in the tops of the tallest span-oaks. Their dwellings resemble great bird's nests constructed of tightly woven vines and roofed with canopies of living, leafy boughs. Few stand at altitudes of less than one hundred feet, making access by non-avians a somewhat chancy endeavor. A Gryph settlement may consist of as many as forty eyries, each housing a family of two to eight individuals. The

largest settlements often include great "Council Eyries" spanning two or more trees in length and breadth.

The Winged Folk (as the Gryphs are sometimes called) are an independent and strong-willed race who prize freedom above all things. They consider themselves the self-appointed guardians of Tamaranth and the surrounding environs, and are known to patrol far beyond the borders of their own territories. Through their travels and communications with other avian species, the Gryph clans are often aware of events which have transpired in even the most far away places. Although they are territorial by nature, Gryphs will sometimes leave their eyries to travel to distant lands. A rare few have chosen to live amongst men, taking to adventuring for profit or working as mercenary scouts, guides, or bounty hunters. The majority of Gryphs, however, consider such prospects to be only slightly more desirable than contracting a case of *gange* (also known as "the slow death").

In the north central region of Tamaranth, surrounded



on three sides by the purple-hued peaks of the Amethyst Mountains, is a sylvan valley of rare beauty. The woods here exude an ancient magic, as if permeated with the essences of a forgotten age. At the foot of the mountains lies the maze-city of Altan, home of the mystical race of beings known as the Ariane.

Perhaps the oldest of Talislanta's many races, the Ariane are striking in appearance. They have skin the color of onyx, long, snowy-white hair, and grey eyes flecked with sparkling, silvery motes. Tall and slender of build, the Ariane exhibit a grace and serenity approximated only by the enchanting folk of Astar or Thaecia. Their mode of dress is simple but elegant: capes, flowing garments and high boots, all made of spinifax, a silken cloth derived from the flax-bearing pods of the thistledown plant.

The ways of the Ariane, at the very least, may safely be described as eccentric. They are a closed and introspective people, who often appear devoid of emotion or lost in thought, as if dreaming. In truth, the Ariane possess an altogether different view of the world than most of the peoples of Talislanta, being practitioners of the mystic doctrine known as Trans-Ascendancy. Thoroughly incomprehensible to non-Ariane, the study of Trans-Ascendancy enables the Ariane to commune with all things in nature, including animals, plants, and even earth and stone. Masters of the art claim to be able to recall each of their past incarnations; high masters are reputed to be capable of maintaining a single consciousness throughout any number of incarnations, and even pre-determining the precise nature of their next incarnation. As such, it is not unusual to see an Ariane engrossed in silent commune with a bird, a tree or some inanimate object, a somewhat disconcerting sight to the uninitiated.


The Ariane's belief in reincarnation has shaped and affected their culture in many ways. Fearing to do harm to some incarnating life form, the Ariane eat only ripened fruits, seeds, and nuts. Ariane tools and utensils are fashioned from stone or dead wood, never from living trees. Even the Maze-City of Altan reflects the curious attitudes

of the Ariane, the entire settlement having been fashioned over centuries of time from a single mound of stone. Radiating outward from a central obelisk, each of the city's many unique structures was designed, formed, and polished smooth solely through the use of Trans-Ascendant magics; no tools were employed, lest the spiritforms dwelling within the stone be unduly offended. Furnishings of living vines and boughs decorate the interior of the Ariane's domiciles, each varying in appearance according to the tastes of its owners.

While the Ariane are a non-violent people, they are not averse to the use of force when it comes to defending their lives or lands. In fact, many display a proficiency with the Ariane bow and mace (both non-lethal weapons) which can hardly be attributed to luck. Mounted on swift Silvermanes, bands of Ariane regularly patrol the areas around Altan. Unwanted intruders are sternly urged to depart, occasionally encouraged by a fusillade of Ariane arrows. Individuals who commit crimes of a more serious nature are often imprisoned in cages of living wood. The length of interment varies according to the severity of the infraction, the Ariane's somewhat abstract conception of time often tending to add to the duration of such stays. In severe cases, the Ariane reserve the right to kill; the Ariane prefer to think of this as just another way of hastening the natural process of reincarnation.

The majority of the Ariane spend their entire lives in Altan, practicing the mystic disciplines of Trans-Ascendancy and meditating on the mysteries of the natural world. For some, the search for enlightenment takes them beyond the forests of Altan and Tamaranth to distant lands. Such individuals, called Druas (meaning "seekers"), may be encountered almost anywhere in Talislanta. It is the custom of the Druas to return to Altan once every seven years in order to relate what they have seen and learned in their travels. This information is magically inscribed upon globes of polished stone (called Tamar), allowing other Ariane to partake of the Druas' experiences.

Shadowmoon (as he was called by outsiders; the Ariane themselves have no need for names) was



one of the Druas. I met him in Sindar of the Seven Kingdoms, in an open-walled tavern frequented by Sindaran curio collectors. My purpose in the tavern was to sell a few minor artifacts, thereby enabling me to finance a voyage to the Eastern Lands. Shadowmoon's motives were less clear, having something to do with "fate," "destiny" or some such esoteric concept. This is the sort of existentialist hocus-pocus which one must get accustomed to when dealing with the Ariane, by the way.

Shadowmoon approached and offered his services as a guide. My luck thus far had been dismal; the Sindarans, with their double-hemisphered mental faculties, had successfully haggled and bargained the most meager prices for my goods. The Druas waved a hand, indicating that he would accept no gold for accompanying me on my journey. I agreed to his offer, overjoyed at the prospect of having saved a few much-needed coins through such an unforeseen coup.

I was soon to learn, however, that there is a reason for everything that an Ariane does. Over the course of the next two years, I would spend more time accompanying Shadowmoon on various missions than in the pursuit of my own original goals. He seemed to know me from the first, while I understood next to nothing of this Druas, who often passed the hours in silent contemplation, staring out across the horizon with unblinking, silver-grey eyes. Still, as time went by I came to mark him as my closest friend.

Aside from Ariane and Gryphs, travelers delving into the woods of Tamaranth may expect to find a number of unusual plant and animal species. Given its name, the fact that stranglevine should be avoided is likely to come as no surprise. In the evening, the ambulatory shrubs known as violet creepers begin to shamle about, causing dismay to the unwary camper. Fortunately, the adhesive liquid exuded by the yellow stickler is more a nuisance than anything else, though it is certain that wood whisps, imps and other diminutive creatures would disagree with this appraisal.

Beastmen prowl the westernmost outskirts of

Tamaranth, providing good target practice for the Gryphs' heavy crossbows. They are dangerous when encountered in numbers, less so in small groups, when they are usually not as difficult to drive off. Under absolutely no condition should one ignore a sighting of exomorph tracks, which may provide the only advance warning of this chameleon-like predator's presence. Assuming that this creature is possessed of mere animal intelligence is a common, and often fatal, error. Lastly, do whatever can be done to elude a gaggle of nag-birds, whose incessant cackling draws the unwanted attentions of a host of unsavory creatures.

THAECIA

Thaecia is an island of rare and splendid beauty located off the southwestern coast of the Talislantan continent in the Azure Ocean. Here waterfalls cascade into shaded lagoons, and fields of flowers sway in the warm ocean breezes. Myriad species of song birds, including the rare varicolored warbler, fill the air with subtle melodic variations. To the west, the enchanting Thaecian Isles curve northward in a graceful arc.

The main island of Thaecia is home to an advanced and prosperous people, known as the Thaecians. Slender and graceful in stature, with silvery complexions and hair a deep blue color, many think the Thaecians to be related in some wise to the Muses of Astar. Though taller and less abstract in nature than the race of Muses, the Thaecians do exhibit certain similar characteristics. They dress in diaphanous robes, and show an aversion to hard work of any sort. The folk of this isle are partial to the nectar of rainbow lotus flowers, a secret distillation of which is used to create "Thaecian nectar," a drink noted for its exotic flavor and exhilarating properties.

The Thaecians live in elaborate pavilions constructed of a translucent fabric called gossamer, artfully stretched over frameworks of silken cords. They build no cities, but simply erect pavilions wherever they wish to live. As such, small



“colonies” of Thaecians are scattered across the main island and certain of the smaller isles. The single settlement of noteworthy size is Caprica, site of the Festival of the Bizarre, an annual exhibition of oddities and diversions attended by peoples from all over Talislanta.

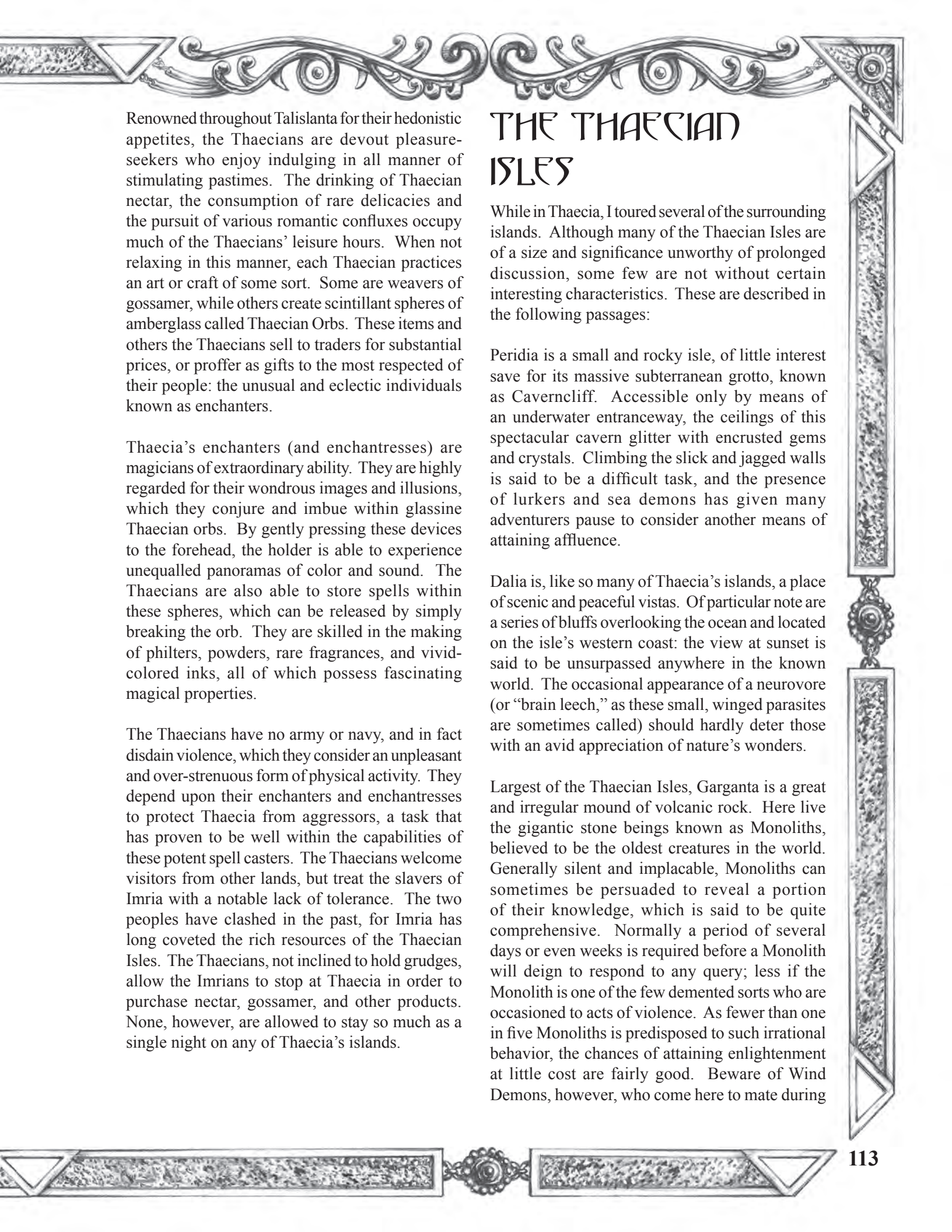
My first attempt at piloting a windship (Editor’s note: See Phantas) resulted in my having to make an unexpected landing in the vicinity of Caprica. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured, and while the ship was undergoing repairs I had the opportunity to visit the Festival, which happily was in progress at the time of my arrival.

I have seen many strange sights in the course of my travels, but few to compare with the Festival of the Bizarre. To gain entrance, one must be attired in costume or make-up. Wearers of the most outlandish garb are awarded a silver goblet, entitling them to drink for free while at the Festival. Competition for this honor is understandably keen, and produces some truly unbelievable results. While I was in attendance, a trio of Cymrilian contortionists won goblets for appearing in the guise of a tanglewood tree (I will refrain from citing particulars with regard to how this feat was

accomplished.)

Multi-colored tents and pavilions litter the festival grounds, each housing some sort of attraction or entertainment: a duel of spell casters for wagers, abominations from the Aberrant Forest in the Wilderlands of Zaran, illusory panoramas, romances, sensations, improbabilities and things defying description. The visitor is invited to observe, partake of, or otherwise experience as he or she desires. Rare delicacies from all over the known world are available, as well as more standard fare, at nominal cost.

The climax of the festival is the awards ceremony, where valuable prizes are given to those who have submitted an attraction or other entry. For the categories “Most Unique,” “Most Provocative,” and “Most Absurd” the prize is ten thousand gold lumens. The grand category, appropriately entitled “Most Bizarre,” carries with it a prize of one hundred thousand gold lumens. A committee of twelve Thaecian enchanters and enchantresses serve as judges, registering varying degrees of approval or disapproval by means of magically exaggerated facial expressions and gestures.



Renowned throughout Talislanta for their hedonistic appetites, the Thaecians are devout pleasure-seekers who enjoy indulging in all manner of stimulating pastimes. The drinking of Thaecian nectar, the consumption of rare delicacies and the pursuit of various romantic confluxes occupy much of the Thaecians' leisure hours. When not relaxing in this manner, each Thaecian practices an art or craft of some sort. Some are weavers of gossamer, while others create scintillant spheres of amberglass called Thaecian Orbs. These items and others the Thaecians sell to traders for substantial prices, or proffer as gifts to the most respected of their people: the unusual and eclectic individuals known as enchanters.

Thaecia's enchanters (and enchantresses) are magicians of extraordinary ability. They are highly regarded for their wondrous images and illusions, which they conjure and imbue within glassine Thaecian orbs. By gently pressing these devices to the forehead, the holder is able to experience unequalled panoramas of color and sound. The Thaecians are also able to store spells within these spheres, which can be released by simply breaking the orb. They are skilled in the making of philters, powders, rare fragrances, and vivid-colored inks, all of which possess fascinating magical properties.

The Thaecians have no army or navy, and in fact disdain violence, which they consider an unpleasant and over-strenuous form of physical activity. They depend upon their enchanters and enchantresses to protect Thaecia from aggressors, a task that has proven to be well within the capabilities of these potent spell casters. The Thaecians welcome visitors from other lands, but treat the slavers of Imria with a notable lack of tolerance. The two peoples have clashed in the past, for Imria has long coveted the rich resources of the Thaecian Isles. The Thaecians, not inclined to hold grudges, allow the Imrians to stop at Thaecia in order to purchase nectar, gossamer, and other products. None, however, are allowed to stay so much as a single night on any of Thaecia's islands.

THE THAECIAN ISLES

While in Thaecia, I toured several of the surrounding islands. Although many of the Thaecian Isles are of a size and significance unworthy of prolonged discussion, some few are not without certain interesting characteristics. These are described in the following passages:

Peridia is a small and rocky isle, of little interest save for its massive subterranean grotto, known as Caverncliff. Accessible only by means of an underwater entranceway, the ceilings of this spectacular cavern glitter with encrusted gems and crystals. Climbing the slick and jagged walls is said to be a difficult task, and the presence of lurkers and sea demons has given many adventurers pause to consider another means of attaining affluence.

Dalia is, like so many of Thaecia's islands, a place of scenic and peaceful vistas. Of particular note are a series of bluffs overlooking the ocean and located on the isle's western coast: the view at sunset is said to be unsurpassed anywhere in the known world. The occasional appearance of a neurovore (or "brain leech," as these small, winged parasites are sometimes called) should hardly deter those with an avid appreciation of nature's wonders.

Largest of the Thaecian Isles, Garganta is a great and irregular mound of volcanic rock. Here live the gigantic stone beings known as Monoliths, believed to be the oldest creatures in the world. Generally silent and implacable, Monoliths can sometimes be persuaded to reveal a portion of their knowledge, which is said to be quite comprehensive. Normally a period of several days or even weeks is required before a Monolith will deign to respond to any query; less if the Monolith is one of the few demented sorts who are occasioned to acts of violence. As fewer than one in five Monoliths is predisposed to such irrational behavior, the chances of attaining enlightenment at little cost are fairly good. Beware of Wind Demons, however, who come here to mate during



certain times of the year.

Cella, on the other hand, is a particularly pleasant place to visit. Nearly as lovely as Dalia, this isle is home to the Thaecian temptress known only as the Enchantress of the Shoals. Reliable reports verify the potency of her magics, which are perhaps the most efficacious in the region. It is said that the Enchantress of the Shoals will grant a wish in return for a favor. The nature of the favor required by the Enchantress is, alas, a matter impossible to determine short of inquiry in person at her manse.

URAG

Urag is a harsh and wind-swept region of arid plains, winding canyons, and sprawling mountain ranges. Once a thriving forest, the area has slowly been reduced to a near wasteland by centuries of neglect and abuse. Its streams are fouled with offal and refuse, its woods felled for timber and fuel, its hills and mountains ravaged by crude mining techniques. The individuals responsible for defiling this land are the bestial humanoid creatures who dwell here, known as the Ur.

Standing between seven and eight feet tall and weighing upwards of five hundred pounds, the Ur are a vile and brutish race. They are quite unpleasant to behold, having leathery hide of a yellow-green color, curved fangs, and facial features of a most un-endearing sort: furrowed brows, pointed ears and deep-set black eyes, the pupils of which gleam either white or red. Their torsos are muscular and ape-like, and are often malformed to some degree.

The Ur are a warlike race who rule by force of arms. They ride ogriphants outfitted with crude, spiked armor, and build massive siege engines



and catapults. Their warriors wield throwing axes and war clubs made from the mummified claws of yaksha and other predatory species. Necklaces of teeth and bone, pieces of hammered plate armor, and various filthy garments made of fur and hide constitute the typical Ur clansman's wardrobe. Rings of black iron are also favored, and are commonly employed to restrain the hair, which the Ur wear in double or triple top-knots.

The Ur clans have no god, but prostrate themselves before immense stone idols. The nature and origin of these monstrous effigies is unknown, even to the Ur themselves; scholars believe they were built long before the Ur clans settled in Urag. Icons depicting these three-eyed idols are sometimes worn by the Ur's witch doctors and are said to have magical properties. The witch doctors of

these folk are generally regarded as charlatans, most being incapable of performing any but the simplest hoodoos and charms.

A cruel and domineering folk, the Ur clans long ago subjugated the miserable creatures known as Darklings, a wretched race of humanoids who once controlled the region of Urag called the Darklands. The Ur employ the Darkling hordes as low-class infantry and as slave-laborers in their mines and timber-cutting operations. Nocturnal by habit, the Darklings are only minimally effective in either capacity. Of more use to the Ur are the Stryx, a race of humanoid, vulture-like avians. Tenuous allies of the Ur clans, the Stryx serve as scouts, spies and messengers. Some say they associate with the Ur clan armies only because this allows them to scavenge battlefields for carrion, which it

is their nature to feed upon.

The Ur clans have three large settlements: Krag, Vodruk, and Grod. All are surrounded by circular stone barricades, and consist primarily of rude hovels made of earth, cracked stone, and rough-cut timbers. These places are havens for disease and filth, and contribute much to the pollution of the local environs. The so-called King of Urag, a particularly huge and ugly member of his race, resides in Krag. His palace, a garish structure made of mud, rock, and a collection of odd trappings pillaged from other peoples, is said to house much stolen treasure. It is heavily guarded by Stryx, Darklings, and chained beasts. Vodruk and Grod are ruled by rival chieftains, each of whom also claims to be King of Urag. Conflicts between the three erstwhile rulers and their disparate factions are common, and often result in bloodshed.

Since their arrival from the Northlands of Narandu, where they were driven out by the armies of the Ice Giants, the Ur clans have succeeded in ravaging much of Urag. They have hunted many animal species into extinction, killing great numbers of creatures for their hides, claws, and meat. The Ur have felled entire woodlands for fuel and timber and stripped the hills and mountains of ore. Having squandered much of Urag's natural resources, it is known that the Ur clans seek expansion into "fresh" territories such as Arim, the Seven Kingdoms and the Plains of Golarin. To this end, a unification of the three Ur clans is greatly feared by many of the folk of Talislanta.

The Onyx Mountains have proved an effective barrier against the Ur clans, who have found it impossible to transport their massive siege engines across such rugged terrain. Consequently, the Arimite citadel of Akbar, a towering stone fortress which bars access to Arim via the Gorge at Akbar, has long been a target of the Ur and their underlings.

One of the low points of my career occurred when, in order to avoid the attentions of certain overzealous Aamanian priests, I was forced to take work with an Arimite merchant caravan. We were approaching the citadel, our wagons laden with iron casks of foul-tasting Arimite liquor, when we

heard the tolling of a dozen brass gongs: the signal used to warn of an impending attack by the Ur.

Displaying a surprising fleetness afoot, the Arimite merchants abandoned their wagons and dashed into the fortress. I myself barely made it to safety before the citadel's black iron gates slammed shut behind me. Mounting a high tower, I looked to the northeast and saw a mighty, iron-clad host approaching through the gaping chasm which was the Gorge at Akbar. At the lead were hordes of Darklings, armed with crude spears and slings; overhead flew squadrons of Stryx wielding barbed pole-hooks. Lastly came the massive Ur in their spiked armor, riding ogriphants and dragging giant battering rams, scourges and fire-throwers.

The Arimites let loose with their own catapults, their archers simultaneously unleashing a storm of arrows against the advancing juggernaut. Darklings fell by the score, riven with black-tipped shafts. Panic and confusion surged through their ranks, but the Ur drove them on from behind with their cruel war whips. The Ur catapults, now within range, rained fire upon the citadel, forcing the Arimite archers to seek cover. Given a moment's respite from the Arimite's bowmen, the Stryx descended upon us from the skies. My own position on the tower now seemed a bit tenuous, and I retreated to the lower depths of the fortress. There, I viewed the battle through a narrow crenellation.

Though the Arimites fought valiantly, their position seemed bleak. The Stryx all but commanded the west wall, and the Ur battering rams were crashing at the citadel gates. The invaders and their allies might indeed have carried the day, but the Darklings, in their greed, fell upon the wagons which the merchants had been forced to abandon outside the fortress. Seeing their liquor supply thus imperiled, the Arimites launched a fierce counterattack, driving their enemies back through the gorge and saving the day. During this last phase of the battle, I took advantage of the resultant commotion and departed via an unguarded rear exit.

Aside from the Ur and their underlings, certain other creatures roam the outskirts of Urag. Giant

ogronts, mindless herbivores of incredible strength, browse for food along the borders of Golarin. The graceful creatures known as Silvermanes sometimes wander over from the Wilderlands of Zaran. The fabled smokk, an odd-looking bird reputed to have an unerring ability for locating precious stones and metals, is found only in certain parts of Urag.

VOLCANIC HILLS

The region known as the Volcanic Hills is one of the most desolate and forlorn sectors of Talislanta. The terrain is torturous, rising and falling in twisted mounds of pitted pumice-stone, angular peaks, and deep ravines. Clouds of smoke and ash, byproducts of the area's considerable volcanic activity, blot out the sun for miles around. Streams of molten lava pose hazards to all but the most adroit and wary travelers, and the air reeks of sulphurous fumes. Few living creatures dwell here, and those that do are of a nature akin to the hostile environment

which encompasses them.

The dominant species in this region is a race of reptilian humanoids known as the Saurans. Standing up to seven feet in height, they are formidable creatures of warlike aspect. Their skin is tough and scaly, their hands and feet clawed, and their jaws lined with rows of sharp teeth. A primitive folk of limited intelligence, the Saurans nonetheless have adapted well to their surroundings. Utilizing volcanic mounds as natural forges, they make crude armor and weapons, mostly of low-grade red iron alloys. The Sauran clans have domesticated the massive creatures known as land dragons, which they outfit with plates of hammered metal and ride into battle. Though ponderous and slow, these beasts are awesomely strong. The Saurans employ their dragons much in the manner of siege engines, using them to batter down enemy fortifications and as cover against opposing missile fire.

The Sauran tribes live in walled stone enclosures of crude design. A clannish folk, they sometimes



war amongst themselves, but are partial to killing Raknids (described further on in the text). The Saurans also have an appetite for man-flesh, and occasionally engage in raids against neighboring Carantheum and Quan. The Kang rely on fortifications and heavy catapults when defending against Sauran war-parties, believing frontal assaults against these foes to be tantamount to mass suicide.

The Saurans know nothing of magic, but do have a religion of sorts. Their patron deity is Satha, a fire-breathing dragon-goddess who supposedly gave birth to the Sauran race. The Saurans erect huge cairns of stone in her name, and fill them with offerings of fire gems, a particularly spectacular variety of ruby common to the Volcanic Hills region. Dragon icons fashioned of beaten metal are also in use among some Sauran tribes.

Though noted for their aggressiveness, the true nature of the Sauran race has long been a topic of debate among scholars, some of whom claim that these creatures are not inherently evil. As evidence, they cite certain Sauran tribes who are known to trade fire gems to Djaffir merchants in return for high-quality metal tools and weapons.



On occasion, Saurans have lived among men, or fought alongside them as mercenary soldiers. In spite of the apparent weight of evidence, however, few scholars have shown any great enthusiasm for testing their theories by traveling to the Volcanic Hills.

WEREWOOD

Werewood is a dark and tangled forest region situated to the north of Zandu. By day, it is an eerie place: tendrils of grey moss hang from its gnarled and misshapen trees hovering above thick swards of bracken, toadstools, and molds. Ravyns, perched on the limbs of rotting spider-oak trees, assail travelers with pointed remarks and morbid prophecies. Strange shadow-forms prowl the undergrowth, their presence felt more than seen. Other creatures, less withdrawn, wait only for victims to approach within reach of talon, claw, or fang.

It is in the evening hours, however, that the true nature of Werewood is fully revealed. Clouds of mist rise, cold and dank, from the forest floor. From the darkening woods mournful howls issue forth: the baleful cries of Werebeasts on the hunt. Huge and horrid in appearance, these bestial creatures combine the worst attributes of men, apes, and tundra beasts.

Normally nocturnal creatures, werebeasts seldom venture from their caves during the daylight hours. By night, they can no longer control their hunger, and must feed. Only minimally intelligent, they will generally attack anything that moves. In fact, some claim that by remaining perfectly still, it is possible to fool these creatures into believing that one is dead (Werebeasts will not eat carrion). Unfortunately, this theory has long lacked the volunteers necessary for thorough, scientific research.

More sinister than Werebeasts are the creatures known as Banes. Black as polished obsidian, these vile humanoids have pointed fangs and eyes that glow in the dark like burning embers. Banes are



vampiric by nature, and feed on warm-blooded prey of all sorts. They possess the uncanny ability to mimic sounds of any sort: voices, animal calls, and even magical spells and incantations. Banes are exceedingly swift, and are capable of moving with great stealth. Their intelligence borders on the diabolical, and it is fortunate that they are few in number.


Perhaps the most unusual denizens of Werewood are the plant creatures known as Mandragores. About three feet in height and vaguely humanoid in form, mandragores stand rooted and immobile throughout the day. During this time they resemble common woodland plants, though it is said that a keen eye can detect otherwise. When darkness falls, they uproot themselves and gather together in groups of up to twenty individuals. Moving silently, the mandragores hunt for prey, which they capture with nets of vines and grasses. Their luckless victims are bound and buried alive. In time, the decomposing bodies fertilize the soil, thereby nourishing the Mandragore population.

Although Werewood is a perilous place, it is not without redeeming qualities. Many useful herb and plant species thrive here, including such rarities as the prophet tree (whose fruit, when

eaten, bestows prophetic visions), shrinking violet, tantalus, contrary vine and cleric's cowl. Quaga, a large species of fresh-water mollusk, dwell in the brackish ponds of this region, and are sought after for the rare, violet-colored pearls which many of them produce.

Also found in Werewood are the diminutive creatures known as Weirdlings, or Wish-Gnomes. Bent and gnarled in form, these shrivel-faced humanoids are both odd and eccentric. They are known to amass great fortunes, which they hoard in garishly decorated underground burrows. According to legend, if a Weirdling is caught, it must give over its treasure or grant its captor a wish (hence the name, Wish-Gnome). To demand both treasure and wish, or to cause harm to a Weirdling, is said to invalidate the contract.

Fortune-hunters have long searched Werewood for weirdlings, who sometimes roam about at night, stealing other creature's valuables and scavenging for lost or buried treasure. Despite their rumped, almost comical appearance, these creatures are nimble and elusive, and even banes cannot catch them if they have room to maneuver. Locating a Wish-Gnome's burrow is said to be a much more efficient way of capturing these strange little



beings, as their lairs seldom have more than a single entrance. Those who seek Weirdling lairs are advised to be wary: the creatures jealously guard their treasures and wishes, and often ward their lairs with tricks and traps.

According to the folk of neighboring Zandir, Werewood is also home to the last of the Dhuna, a people who bear some resemblance to the folk of Silvanus. Persecuted for practicing witchcraft, the Dhuna were forced to seek refuge in the forests of Werewood following the Phaedran Cult Wars of ancient times. Some claim they are an evil people, others say they are merely strange. The Dhuna are believed to be practitioners of witchcraft, the womenfolk in particular being credited with having certain extraordinary attributes. Not the least of these is the reputed ability of the Dhuna witchwomen to capture a man's heart with but a single kiss.

There is a single river which runs through Werewood, known as the Sascasm. Flowing south from the Sardonyx Mountains, a branch of the Sascasm winds its way through these forests, disappearing underground just west of the Arim border. At one time, it was the fashion among the wizards of ancient Phaedra to be buried along the banks of the Sascasm. According to the style of the day, the Phaedran wizards made arrangements to be interred in mausoleum-like structures of a most unusual sort. The interior decor of these stone edifices was often made to resemble an elaborate sitting room, dining hall, or bedroom, according to the wizard's preference of leisure-time activities. The mummified body of the late wizard, dressed in lavish garb and propped-up in some appropriate pose, added the finishing touch to the burial chamber. Though Sarista curio-dealers and grave robbers have stripped many of the old Phaedran tombs of their wares, it is probable that a number of these crypts remain undiscovered, overgrown with weeds, vines, and mosses.

I had heard stories of the Phaedran tombs while in the city of Zanth, and had become intrigued with the idea of mounting an expedition into Werewood. Following the fiasco which ensued during our abortive attempt to locate the City


of the Dead (Editor's note: See Khazad), the magician Crystabal decided to retire for a time from adventuring. Nonplussed by this turn of events, I went on alone to the Zandir border outpost of Zandre, hoping there to secure the services of an able and trustworthy guide.

In Zandre I met Tane, a black-furred Jaka hunter with piercing green eyes and the cold heart of a born mercenary. After considerable negotiation (regarding terms of payment and a split of any profits realized on the venture, among other concerns), the Jaka agreed to undertake the mission. We obtained provisions and gear suitable for the trip and made arrangements with the Zandir scouts to borrow one of their skiffs. Much as I disliked traveling by boat, the Sascasm River afforded us the swiftest and safest means of reaching our objective.

We left the next morning, Tane crouching at the fore with bow drawn, his keen eyes scanning the riverbanks to either side of our vessel. In a state of some agitation I manned the rudder, certain that at any moment the rickety Zandir skiff would spring a leak and send the two of us to a watery grave. The day passed without event, however, and when night fell, each of us took turns on guard so that the other might rest. Tane reported sighting a pair of werebeasts prowling the western bank at the end of his shift, though I saw nothing when it came my time to watch.

Two days passed, each very much like the first, though at one point the Jaka claimed to have caught a glimpse of a Wind Demon flying high above the darkening forest. On the fourth day Tane spotted something peculiar on the eastern bank of the river. We went ashore to investigate, tethering the skiff to the gnarled roots of a sap-barrel tree.

Tane led the way through the underbrush towards what appeared to be a small hillock covered with mosses, vines and river plants. When we had approached within a few yards, the outline of a large stone structure became visible beneath the tangled mass of vegetation. Excitement and anticipation gripped us both, and we began searching for an entrance to the tomb. We went in separate directions in order not to waste time; dusk



was nearly upon us, and the creatures of the night would soon be emerging from their lairs.

I was examining the south side of the ancient structure, when I heard Tane calling me. Following the sound of his voice, I continued on ahead. Suddenly, a trio of banes sprang forth from the forest. Their purple-black skin and ivory fangs glistened in the dimming light, and their eyes glowed with red malice. Mimicking Tane's voice to perfection, the banes offered sardonic condolences to me and approached with claws extended.

A bowstring twanged from somewhere above, and one of the banes fell with an arrow in its throat. A second turned and met the same fate. I unleashed a Spell of Unending Torment upon the last remaining bane, and the fiend leapt away into the forest, howling in pain.

Above me, Tane stood on the roof of the stone edifice, bow in hand. He motioned for me to climb up and join him, and I ascended to the rooftop, using the tangle of vines as a makeshift rope ladder. There Tane showed me the tomb's sole entrance: a trapdoor of solid stone, to which was affixed a heavy ring of pitted, black iron. Unfortunately, the two of us together could not raise the door, such was its weight. With darkness pressing upon us, we decided to leave Werewood and return to examine our find, perhaps with Crystabal, on another day. The mission had not been entirely fruitless, however; the enterprising Tane had fortunately had the foresight to divest the dead banes of their fangs, claws and certain vital organs, which we later sold to a Sindaran alchemist at a reasonable profit.

THE WILDERLANDS OF ZARAN

From the borders of the Seven Kingdoms to the Volcanic Hills, the vast territories of the Wilderlands of Zaran occupy much of the central sector of Talislanta. Here, amidst the shadow-haunted wastelands, lie the ruins of the long-dead

civilizations of the Forgotten Age: Elande, Zaran, Sharna, Xambria, Sursia, Ashann, and others too old to recall. Much of the devastation caused by the Great Disaster took place within this region, which has remained largely unpopulated by civilized peoples since that time.

An ancient thoroughfare runs through the Wilderlands of Zaran, called, appropriately enough, the Wilderlands Road. At one time, the road was paved with hexagonal stones from the Western Empire of Phaedra clear to the fabled Eastern Lands. Most of the stones have long since been scavenged, overgrown with weeds, or worn away by the elements, leaving only a hard-packed dirt trail. In the spring, heavy rains sometimes render sections of the road useless for weeks on end. During other times of the year, the highway is heavily traveled by merchant caravans from the Seven Kingdoms, Zandir traders, Aamanian pilgrims and others, all en route to Carantheum. Regardless of the time of year, the presence of bandit gangs and predatory beasts makes passage through this region in anything less than a large, well-armed group a foolhardy, and possibly suicidal, endeavor.

While featureless wastelands comprise much of the Wilderlands of Zaran, the area is not without certain points of interest, including the following:

THE ABERRANT FOREST

To the south of the Barrens lies the Aberrant Forest, a weird and grotesque woodland the origins of which may be attributed to a magical mishap of unparalleled proportions. All manner of rare and exotic vegetation can be found in this place, though nothing that grows or lives here is as nature intended it to be. The plants and trees of this region appear heedless of natural law, growing to immense proportions or becoming impossibly gnarled and twisted in form. Murky streams flow uphill, stagnant ponds move slowly across the land, and the very ground seems at times to undulate as if alive. From the underbrush, animate tendrils of tanglewood reach out to ensnare the incautious traveler, hedgerows of serpentine thornwood making swift passage through these woodlands

an implausible stratagem. Less easily identifiable types of flora and fauna make known their presence by biting, tripping, speaking in tongues, or through even more unusual methods.

As many varieties of costly herbs grow throughout the Aberrant Forest, visitors to this macabre woodland are not unknown. Alchemists, thaumaturges, and other individuals with an especially avid interest in naturalism sometimes come here, drawn by the region's seemingly endless variety of strange and exotic life forms. Indeed, there are living organisms dwelling in the Aberrant Forest which defy classification as either plant or animal, and abominations too hideous or bizarre even to describe.

The profusion of oddities which populate this region might seem to lend a degree of credibility to an old Phaedran legend, which claims that the Forest and its unusual residents are the creations of one Rodinn, better known as the "Mad Wizard." Credited with the development of numerous minor magics and theorisms, Rodinn is believed to have lived during the latter part of what is now known as the Forgotten Age. A benign, if slightly demented, sort of fellow, the Mad Wizard was forced to flee his native land of Pompados after committing a series of indiscretions (reputedly involving the wife and seven daughters of the Emperor of Pompados).

Seeking refuge in the Wilderlands of Zaran, Rodinn constructed a manse deep within a secluded and scenic woodland area, continuing his magical experiments from within the safety of his hideaway. During this time, it is said that Rodinn chanced upon the discovery of quintessence, a substance capable of transmuting the very nature of matter. An unfortunate accident seems to have led to the untimely release of a great quantity of incorrectly distilled quintessence, wreaking havoc upon the surrounding environs. Some say that only Rodinn's swift intervention prevented an even greater and more widespread catastrophe; others theorize that Rodinn's mishap was the catalyst which spawned the Great Disaster and brought about an end to the first and most glorious age of Talislantan civilization. In any case, it was

reported that Rodinn and his manse both survived the ordeal, though the Mad Wizard appeared to have kept somewhat of a low profile following this unfortunate turn of events.

THE LABYRINTHS OF SHARNA

To the south of Carantheum stand several maze-like structures of certifiable antiquity. Some scholars attribute these ruins to the Sharna, a long-dead race of whom little is known. Artifacts from the Sharna labyrinths are highly valued as curios and collectibles, if for no discernible reason other than their avowed scarcity. In truth, the Sharna appear to have had an uncommon talent for creating items of the most tasteless and unaesthetic sort. Nevertheless, the demand for these unattractive objects continues to be high in some circles, a behavioral anomaly which has heartened many a generation of antique and curio dealers.

Contributing to the rarity of Sharna artifacts is the presence of Nightstalkers, weird creatures who hail from the astral plane. Tall, gaunt, and repellent in appearance, nightstalkers have matted black hide and three glowing eyes. Their membranous pseudo-wings allow them to glide on the winds, though sustained flight is beyond their capabilities. In the late evening hours, nightstalkers sometimes appear on the material plane, attracted by the dreams of sleeping beasts and men.

The areas about the ruins are populated by Ferrans, rat-faced humanoids of short stature whose bodies are covered with a coat of dirty brown fur. They live in underground tunnel complexes, coming forth in groups to scrounge for food or to rob unwary travelers of their possessions. Ferrans will steal anything that they can carry off and drag into their lairs. They are shrewd and cunning, employing weapons and gear pilfered from other creatures in their raids. Though physically unimposing, Ferrans are able to emit a horrid stench which generally serves to dismay their foes.

THE KHARAKHAN WASTES

To the northeast lie the Kharakhan Wastes, a region despoiled by firestorms and other unnatural phenomena during the time of the Great Disaster. The burnt and blackened ruins of Kharakhan, a city once occupied by a race of demi-giants, stand here like massive tombstones, dismal monuments of a bygone era. Where once flowed mighty rivers, winding chasms now cut across the plains and lowlands. Here, giant land dragons graze on dry grasses, heedless of crag spiders and other noxious predators.

The Kharakhan Wastes are home to the Araq, a hybrid of man and Sauran created by a well-meaning but ill-advised sorcerer whose name has long since been forgotten. The purpose of the experiment seems to have been to breed a race of warriors adapted to harsh, desert and wilderness climes. In this regard, the sorcerer was successful: the Araq's scaly brown hide renders them immune



to the effects of Talislanta's twin suns, and their dorsal membranes act as effective regulators of body temperature. They require little food or water to sustain themselves, and can subsist on almost any type of organic materials, including briars and even waste products.

Unfortunately Araq also combine the worst attributes of their forebears. Like Saurans, Araq are warlike and prone to violence. They are skilled in the use of spears and bone war-axes, but will fight with fang and claw if necessary. From the races of men, the Araq have inherited numerous vices: greed, lust, dishonesty, and a propensity towards fits of unconscionable, cruel and murderous behavior.

The Araq prowl the Kharakhan Wastes in numbers, mounted on the two-headed reptilian creatures known as Duadir. Their primary source of food is the land dragon, from which they derive meat, hide, and bone. The latter two resources are used in the making of many useful items, from boots and loincloths to shields, weapons, and other gear. The Araq prey upon anything that lives, including crag spiders, vermin, and travelers who venture too near their domains. Their wars with certain of the Sauran tribes of the neighboring Volcanic Hills region have at least served the useful purpose of keeping the population of both races in check.

It is natural to suppose that reasonable folk would be averse to traveling in these parts, and for the most part, this is the case. In all candor, however, the giant ruins of Kharakhan are not devoid of interest. Many of the city's towering structures still stand, and oversized artifacts and curios are said to litter the subterranean levels. Of particular interest are the silver coins once employed by the ancient folk of Kharakhan, which measure three to four inches in diameter and weigh up to one pound a piece. Even the most miserly collectors will seldom offer less than a hundred and ten gold lumens for these unique items.

The area bordering the Volcanic Hills is home to a diminutive species of winged reptiles, known as draconids. Though the bite of these creatures causes searing pain, the Araq consider them a

delicacy, and will even risk encounters with Sauran war parties in order to obtain draconids.

THE BARRENS

Westernmost of the Wilderlands territories is the Barrens, a region of rocky hills, salt flats, and wide stretches of scrub plains. Herds of land lizards, valued throughout Talislanta as pack and burden beasts, roam the sparse plains in great numbers. As they are slow moving and dull-witted, these ponderous quadrupeds are fairly easy to capture by employing rope lassoes and a modicum of ingenuity. Herding or otherwise transporting even a single land lizard is often another matter entirely, for the creatures possess a obstinacy sufficient to try the patience of a saint. They are appeased to some extent by salt, which land lizards find most appetizing. Unfortunately, the tendency of these creatures to gather around the salt flats of this region can present complexities with regard to the use of this substance as a lure. Also native to the alkali plains of this sector are mangonel lizards, a combative species of reptile employed as war-steeds by the Thralls of Taz.

The low and craggy hills of this region are riddled with caverns and underground passageways, many the works of Earth Demons. These squat, six-limbed monsters feed on minerals and metal ores, voiding gemstones, which they are unable to digest. The tunnels and caves made by Earth Demons are often littered with these offerings, as well as rock urchins, a species of lichen-eating echinoderms considered a delicacy in many lands. Aspiring gem collectors and gourmands alike are cautioned of the dangers posed by cave bats and the dreaded scarlet sporozoid. The former are great, shaggy-hided creatures of vampiric habit. The scarlet sporozoid has long baffled naturalists, who disagree on whether the insidious organism is a fungus or an animal. These entities prey on living creatures by expelling a cloud of red, spore-like parasites, which devour organic materials at an alarming rate of speed. After dispersing its spores, the "parent" entity dies, and new sporozoids grow from the infested host; a rather gruesome sight, or so some claim.

Also found in the hills of this region are the Enim, a race of cannibalistic, giant devils. They have skin the color of brass, curved horns, and horrid tusk-like fangs. Standing up to fourteen feet in height, Enim are a fearsome sight to behold. They wield huge stone clubs carved with the visages of leering devils in battle, and wear necklaces of skulls, which they collect as mementoes of their grisly conquests.

The Enim are solitary creatures who dwell in caves located deep below the surface. Like all devils, they are the mortal foes of demonkind, and have a special dislike for Earth Demons. Enim are fond of men, however, whom they regard as fine eating. They occasionally emerge from their underground lairs in search of food or amusement. When not motivated by hunger, Enim sometimes entertain themselves by attempting to crush other creatures with large rocks, which they are able to hurl considerable distances. In the rare instances

when two or more Enim meet above ground, they will almost always be engaged in such "sport." Enim have a weakness for games of chance or any sort of contest, particularly if wagering is involved. Individuals who have a penchant for high-stakes gambling should be wary of the fact that most Enim know something of magic, and are not averse to cheating if given the opportunity.

THE INDEPENDENT CITY STATES

The Wilderlands of Zaran are populated mainly by wild beasts and savage tribes, though a few bastions of civilization exist in isolated spots throughout the region. Known collectively as the Independent City States, these minor principalities wield little political or economic influence, but serve a useful purpose as safe havens for travelers. The most notable of these are described briefly in the following text.



MARUK

Maruk is also a walled city, though it is considerably less prosperous than Hadj. Built upon the ruins of an unknown civilization, the city was originally a place of notable splendor. Its people, called the Maruk, made a good living by selling herbs and dried fruit to Carantheum and Faradun.

Soon after construction of the city had been completed, a series of misfortunes, occurring at intervals of thirteen months, beset the Maruk. Crops failed, animals died, the city was plagued by infestations of lice, locusts, rats, weevils, and so forth. Attempts were made to remedy the problem, which was diagnosed variously as being the result of an ancient curse, malicious spirits, ill-aspected stars, sunspots, and a host of even more improbable causes. Time and again, each of the proposed solutions met with failure.

Much to the chagrin of the Maruk, this condition has persisted with regularity to the present day. The city has slowly fallen into ruin, all attempts at effecting much-needed repairs and renovations having long since been deemed unprofitable. Reduced to selling oground dung in order to make ends meet, the people of Maruk have become morose and gloomy. They dress in unflattering garments made of sack-cloth, and walk about with their eyes downcast. Wan and unhealthy in appearance, the Maruk are considered harbingers of doom in many lands, and are shunned as if they carried the plague.

The ruling council of Maruk, themselves victims of numerous mishaps and misfortunes, continues to seek a solution to the city's woes. Though the government has technically been bankrupt for decades, a reward of one hundred thousand gold lumens continues to be offered to any who can successfully lift the curse. The offer still draws a few optimistic mystics, savants and reputed miracle-workers, though not nearly so many as in years past.

DANUVIA

Danuvia is a great stone citadel established long ago by moderate factions who fled the old

Phaedran Empire around the time of the Cult Wars. The people who live here, known as the Danuvians, are tall and bronze-skinned, with strong features. Traditionally lacking in any form of ambition, Danuvian males are uniformly feeble, lazy, and addle-brained. As such, the city is governed by females, who serve in all positions of authority.

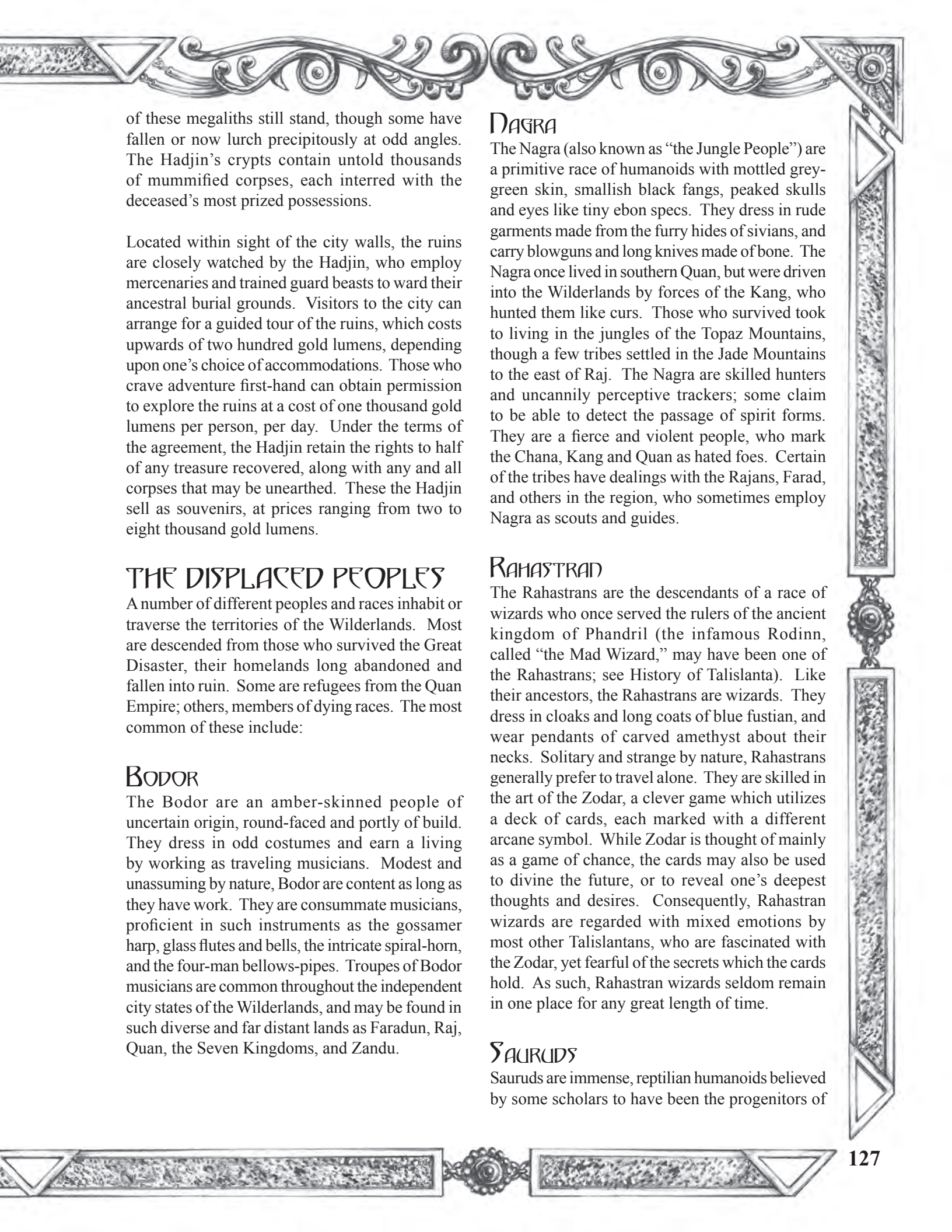
Danuvia's most saleable commodity is its mercenary army, which is comprised entirely of female archers, lancers, and swordswomen. They decorate their faces with colored pigments and ride greymanes into battle. Equipped with black iron corslets and parrying bracers, the Danuvians are considered among the most skilled fighters on the continent.

Rather than accept their own, pathetic males as mates, most Danuvian females seek male partners from other lands. Each year, the queen of Danuvia holds a great pageant in the city, in which men of all nationalities are invited to compete for the affections of the Danuvian females. The top three contestants are rewarded by being appointed to the queen's "harem" of male consorts, with lesser personages staking claim to the next most desirous males according to their rank or importance in Danuvian society.

HADJ

Hadj is a walled city, built in the middle of an arid plain which stretches for miles in all directions. The folk who live here, called the Hadjin, are similar in physical stature to the Cymrilians of the Seven Kingdoms. They daub their complexions with colored powders, and dress in layered robes, upwards sweeping caps and long, velveteen gloves. A people of highly refined tastes, the Hadjin wave themselves with scented fans when in the presence of outsiders, whom they deem offensive in terms of appearance and odor.

The Hadjin possess no useful skills to speak of, but are the inheritors of an incredibly vast store of wealth left to them by their early ancestors. The source of this great fortune is a series of giant, obelisk-like structures, built centuries ago to house the Hadjin dead. Over seventy feet in height, most



of these megaliths still stand, though some have fallen or now lurch precipitously at odd angles. The Hadjin's crypts contain untold thousands of mummified corpses, each interred with the deceased's most prized possessions.

Located within sight of the city walls, the ruins are closely watched by the Hadjin, who employ mercenaries and trained guard beasts to ward their ancestral burial grounds. Visitors to the city can arrange for a guided tour of the ruins, which costs upwards of two hundred gold lumens, depending upon one's choice of accommodations. Those who crave adventure first-hand can obtain permission to explore the ruins at a cost of one thousand gold lumens per person, per day. Under the terms of the agreement, the Hadjin retain the rights to half of any treasure recovered, along with any and all corpses that may be unearthed. These the Hadjin sell as souvenirs, at prices ranging from two to eight thousand gold lumens.

THE DISPLACED PEOPLES

A number of different peoples and races inhabit or traverse the territories of the Wilderlands. Most are descended from those who survived the Great Disaster, their homelands long abandoned and fallen into ruin. Some are refugees from the Quan Empire; others, members of dying races. The most common of these include:

BODOR

The Bodor are an amber-skinned people of uncertain origin, round-faced and portly of build. They dress in odd costumes and earn a living by working as traveling musicians. Modest and unassuming by nature, Bodor are content as long as they have work. They are consummate musicians, proficient in such instruments as the gossamer harp, glass flutes and bells, the intricate spiral-horn, and the four-man bellows-pipes. Troupes of Bodor musicians are common throughout the independent city states of the Wilderlands, and may be found in such diverse and far distant lands as Faradun, Raj, Quan, the Seven Kingdoms, and Zandu.

NAGRA

The Nagra (also known as "the Jungle People") are a primitive race of humanoids with mottled grey-green skin, smallish black fangs, peaked skulls and eyes like tiny ebon specs. They dress in rude garments made from the furry hides of sivians, and carry blowguns and long knives made of bone. The Nagra once lived in southern Quan, but were driven into the Wilderlands by forces of the Kang, who hunted them like curs. Those who survived took to living in the jungles of the Topaz Mountains, though a few tribes settled in the Jade Mountains to the east of Raj. The Nagra are skilled hunters and uncannily perceptive trackers; some claim to be able to detect the passage of spirit forms. They are a fierce and violent people, who mark the Chana, Kang and Quan as hated foes. Certain of the tribes have dealings with the Rajans, Farad, and others in the region, who sometimes employ Nagra as scouts and guides.

RAHASTRAN

The Rahastrans are the descendants of a race of wizards who once served the rulers of the ancient kingdom of Phandril (the infamous Rodinn, called "the Mad Wizard," may have been one of the Rahastrans; see History of Talislanta). Like their ancestors, the Rahastrans are wizards. They dress in cloaks and long coats of blue fustian, and wear pendants of carved amethyst about their necks. Solitary and strange by nature, Rahastrans generally prefer to travel alone. They are skilled in the art of the Zodar, a clever game which utilizes a deck of cards, each marked with a different arcane symbol. While Zodar is thought of mainly as a game of chance, the cards may also be used to divine the future, or to reveal one's deepest thoughts and desires. Consequently, Rahastran wizards are regarded with mixed emotions by most other Talislantans, who are fascinated with the Zodar, yet fearful of the secrets which the cards hold. As such, Rahastran wizards seldom remain in one place for any great length of time.

SAURUDS

Sauruds are immense, reptilian humanoids believed by some scholars to have been the progenitors of



the race of Saurans, who inhabit the Volanic Hills region. They stand up to eight feet in height, are massively built, and have rough, scaly brown hide. Their features are not unlike a land lizard's in appearance, though their eyes are smaller and more deep-set, and their fangs somewhat less obtrusive. Sauruds favor abbreviated attire, loin clouts and bands of strider or dragon hide usually sufficing to suit their needs. In battle, they wield huge, spiked clubs; partly as a matter of preference, but also because these giant creatures lack the manual dexterity required to utilize more sophisticated weaponry. Sauruds are sometimes employed as bodyguards and sentinels by other

peoples, positions for which these ferocious brutes are generally well-suited. Their tiny brains are incapable of grasping any but the least intricate ideas, however, limiting their usefulness even in these capacities. The race seems on the verge of becoming extinct, and there are perhaps only a few hundred Sauruds left on the entire continent.

XAMBRIANS

The Xambrians claim to be descended from the folk of Xambria, an ancient kingdom destroyed during the Great Disaster. They resemble the Ariane of Tamaranth in stature, but have bone-white skin

and long, raven hair. Their customary mode of dress includes a cape, high boots, vest and tight breeches of black strider's hide, with gauntlets of fine, silver chain mesh. A silver-shod staff and a pair of daggers, crossed at the waist, completes the outfit. The Xambrians blame the demise of their civilization on the sorcerers of ancient Talislanta, and bear a grudge against spell casters in general. Most are wizard hunters by trade, who sell their services for gold. Few in number, they are a grim and moody lot, regarded with suspicion by the majority of Talislandans.

YITEK

The Yitek are a nomadic people, brown-skinned and built along lean and narrow proportions. They dress in veiled head dresses, capes and loose-fitting garments made of woven gauze, grey with the dust of crypts and barrows. The Yitek are tomb-robbers by profession, who range the Wilderlands from the Labyrinths of Sharna to the Kharakhan Wastes, scouring the ruins for valuable treasures and artifacts. They are frequent visitors to the city


of Hadj, and are friendly with the Djaffir bandit tribes. Known for their morbid sense of humor, the Yitek are avoided by many folk, who find their line of work distasteful.

Za

The Za are a race of nomadic bandits who range far and wide throughout much of the Wilderlands. Claiming descent from the original folk of the vanished kingdom of Zaran, the Za have long contended that the Wilderlands territories are rightfully theirs. In this way they rationalize robbing and killing any who "trespass" in "their" land.

The Za are lean and muscular of build, most standing at or just under six feet in height. Their skin is a pallid yellow in hue, leathery in texture and lined with creases and wrinkles. It is the custom of these folk to shave their skulls, and to forego all but the most abbreviated attire. Necklaces of hammered black iron disks are favored, as are reptile-skin head and arm bands. Males generally





wear long, braided mustaches; females, two long braids, one above either ear.

Fierce and cruel by nature, the Za wield jagged-edged blades and bows which utilize barbed arrows. Greymanes, with long manes and tails done in tight braids, serve as steeds for the bandit clans. Though the Za sometimes take prisoners for sale as slaves, they usually put most of their victims to death by the sword, this being thought of as fitting punishment for trespassers. Exceptionally valorous foes are often accorded the dubious honor of being taken alive, so that they may later be slain in ritual fashion. The Za drink the blood of these vanquished enemies from skull-cups, believing that this gives them the strength of their foes.

There is little sense of unity among the Za bandit peoples, whose clans engage in violent clashes over the rights to the best raiding territories. When a clan has lost its leader the group often simply disbands, the surviving members moving on to other clans or becoming mercenary warriors and scouts. It is all the more surprising, then, that the Za clans claim to have a single ruler, known as the Tirshata. According to the Za, the identity of the Tirshata must remain unknown until the time comes for the Za to again reclaim their lost homelands. At the designated hour, say the Za, "the Tirshata shall be revealed, and the Za will rise up and smite all their enemies, until they alone rule the lands from east to west." Talislantan scholars, who by and large consider the Za to be on an intellectual par with the Wildmen of Yrmania, lend little credence to this folk tale.

WANDERERS OF ASHANN

Among the most peculiar inhabitants of the Wilderlands are the mysterious individuals known only as the Wanderers of Ashann. They stand nearly eight feet in height, and dress in long, billowing robes, which hang loosely upon their angular frames. Their features are entirely concealed beneath elaborate head dresses, and each carries a staff of white oak inscribed with a curious symbol: a staring orb, set in the center of a silver pentacle. Some believe that the Wanderers are without eyes, and can only see by means of these

devices, which are magical in nature.

The Wanderers are the last of the Shan, a race whose homeland of Ashann was destroyed during the Great Disaster. Their cities and lands reduced to parched desert, the few surviving Shan became Wanderers, traversing the Wilderlands territories in small groups of two to five individuals. To the present day, the descendants of the Shan refuse to settle in any one area, preferring instead to wander about from place to place as the mood suits them. They are sometimes encountered walking among the rubble of Talislanta's ruined cities, seemingly lost in thought.

According to the Dracartans, whose nomadic ancestors made the acquaintance of the Wanderers many years ago, the Wanderers of Ashann possess uncanny mystic powers. Wild beasts will not turn on them, and even the bloodthirsty Za and Araq tribes give the Wanderers a wide berth. Peaceful and retiring by nature, they are the only Talislantans who do not fear to travel through Zaran unarmed and on foot.

While the Wanderers of Ashann display a casual disregard for the affairs of other creatures and beings, they are not altogether unapproachable. If questioned directly, a Wanderer will reply, but in the briefest manner possible. They are conversant in many tongues, and know much of what transpires in the Wilderlands of Zaran. Questions regarding the Wanderers themselves are invariably met with silence and a wave of an outstretched hand, a response indicating that the discussion has come to a conclusion.

Ramm, the Thrall who was our guide when I visited Mog, had spent a considerable amount of time in the eastern borderlands of the Seven Kingdoms, which lie adjacent to the Wilderlands of Zaran. Mounted on spiny-skinned Mangonel lizards, he and his mixed band of Thralls and foreign mercenaries had fought against Za bandits, Beastmen and in one instance, a pair of giant Enim. I often tried to coax him into talking of his many escapades while we sat around the campfire late at night, though usually to little avail. Like all Thralls, Ramm was sullen of temperament,

and was seldom content unless a good fight was in the making. Crystabal and I both liked him, however; during dull moments, one could always find amusement in trying to count the incredible number of tattoos which covered Ramm's body from head to toe.

XANADAS

Xanadas is an isolated region located high amidst the towering peaks of the Opal Mountains. Like the lands which lie to its north, Xanadas is covered year round with deep layers of snow and ice. Atop the highest mountain in the known world (called Mt. Mandu) is the ancient edifice known as the Temple of the Seven Moons. Here, where even the dreaded Ice Giants will not go, dwell the fabled Savants of Xanadas.

The origin of the Temple remains a mystery, its current occupants possibly being Mandalan savants who long ago fled from the Quan Empire. All are old beyond reckoning, their life spans extended by adherence to certain secret regimens and practices.

They dress in long robes of silver and black, and wear elaborate headdresses inscribed with arcane runes, symbols, and sigils.

The Xanadasian Savants are mystics and scholars of unrivaled ability. As the self-appointed chroniclers of Talislanta history, they observe and record phenomena of all sorts: the position of the stars and planets, the delicate fluxes of time and space, the emergence and disappearance of plant and animal species, and so forth. Seated on pedestals of lavender stone, they gaze into crystals of polished blue diamond, monitoring and notating the activities of the continent's civilized peoples. Every event of note is recorded in massive, leather-bound tomes. When filled with information, these books are stored in great underground vaults.

Members of a secret mystic order, the Savants and their ancestors before them have chronicled the history of Talislanta for many centuries. Their reasons for doing so are unclear, but are believed by some to be based on an ancient legend. In the tale, Xanadas, a great mystic after whom the region was later named, is summoned by Death to meet his inevitable end. Though his pupils and



associates grieved upon hearing of their master's imminent doom, Xanadas bade them not to worry; he would visit with the gods for a time, after which he would return to the material plane and relate the secrets of the afterlife to all who waited for him.

Those who accept the veracity of this story claim that the Xanadasian Savants are the last of the great mystic's followers. They say that the Savants record important events, believing that their master will wish to know all that has transpired in his absence. Though many think the legend to be somewhat far-fetched, others state that the tale is supported by certain odd traditions observed by the Savants themselves. Specifically, these involve the leaving of a light in each of the Temple's windows by night, the custom of setting one extra place at all meals, and a few other minor eccentricities. When asked the significance of such observances, the Savants merely shrug and cast their eyes heavenward.

The Savants of Xanadas are said to welcome visitors, whom they question at length in order to supplement or verify their observations. They are a curious lot, who seem to want to know everything. It is their practice to allow any who come here to study, and on occasion, some do. Passage to the mountain retreat of the Savants is difficult, however, and fraught with perils both natural and unnatural.

YRMANIA

Yrmania is an untamed wilderness region which lies to the west of the barren ice fields of Narandu. Hemmed in by mountains along its frigid southern borders, Yrmania features a widely divergent mixture of terrain types: stretches of coniferous forest, rocky hills, solitary peaks, tundra, withering cliffs, ravines, and sink-holes. To the east, the flat expanses of the Lost Sea (described in detail further on in the text) stretch for miles on end. This savage realm is home to two distinct humanoid tribes: the Jaka and the unpredictable Wildmen.

Native to the western hills and forests, the Jaka

are a race of intelligent humanoids whose features resemble a cross between man, wolf and panther. They are a striking people, with sleek black fur, a silvery-gray mane, and blazing green eyes. Most stand about six feet in height, a certain lithe muscularity being a common trait of all members of this race.

The Jaka are solitary beings, sullen and introspective in nature. Hunters of predatory beasts by trade, they prey upon werebeasts, yaksha, and other carnivores, selling the hides and fangs of these creatures to merchants in Arim, Zandu and Aaman. They are skilled riders, employing lightweight shortbows to good effect from the backs of their mounts (typically, greymanes or snowmanes).

Though considered barbaric by the people of the western lands, the Jaka are a complex and cunning folk. They are canny traders, and possess the keenest senses of all the humanoid races. Unsurpassed as trackers, Jaka are much in demand as scouts, hunters and guides. A few also possess some talent for the taming of wild beasts, an ability which once caused the Jaka's ancestors to be known as "the Beastmasters of the Northern Woods."

While the Jaka are loners at heart, they are known to make steadfast, if not particularly sociable, companions. They are equally famous for turning on those who seek to cross them, and are quite capable of cold-blooded murder if the situation warrants such action.

The sparsely wooded badlands of central Yrmania are home to the strange folk known as the Wildmen. Bestial and ape-like in appearance, the Wildmen have sharp fangs, nostrils like slits, and dark, deep-set eyes. They wear their shaggy hair about their head and face in braids and dreadlocks, daubed with various colored pigments. For clothes, the Wildmen employ rude leg-wrappings, arm-wrappings, and loincloths made from strips of animal hide.

As travelers into their territories have found, the Wildmen and Wildwomen of Yrmania are aptly named. They are as vicious as mad dogs, and will


attack even large, well-armed parties without the slightest hesitation or provocation. In combat, the Wildmen wield the r'ruh, a sharpened stone blade affixed to a long, leather thong. Swung over the head at great speed, r'ruh emit a "singing" sound which is intended to strike fear in the hearts of the Wildmen's foes. These devices are employed both as hand and missile weapons by the Wildmen, whose crazed style of combat is, frankly speaking, rather strange to behold.

According to the Jaka, the Wildmen of Yrmania revere Manik, a mysterious entity referred to in certain scholarly texts as "The Mad God." Their

shamans (both male and female) are said to mate with the hideous creatures known as yaksha, a claim considered to be the height of absurdity in most parts. More widely accepted is the Wildmen's purported use of skullcap, a bone-white variety of parasitic mushroom. Normally a lethal toxin, the mushroom does not seem to harm the Wildmen, who have evidently developed immunity to the substance's deadly effects.

The ritual consumption of skullcap, a practice believed to be widespread amongst the Wildmen, would seem to explain the occasionally irrational actions of their warriors. Under the influence of





this substance, the Wildmen are totally without fear. They appear to be immune to pain, attacking with savage bloodlust even when riddled by scores of wounds. Though considered to be among the most dangerous of antagonists, these barbarous folk are prone to fits of seemingly mindless behavior. In the heat of battle, Wildmen have been known to leap crazily off cliffs or rock ledges, turn upon each other, or simply attack anything in their path (including trees, bushes, and even inanimate objects). Their shamans, few of whom possess any true magical abilities, are said to be even more insane than their unstable tribesmen.

As far as anyone knows, the Wildmen have no settlements, but simply travel about from place to place, stopping when they become tired or bored. Rival clans often fight among each other, a situation which has proved useful in keeping the otherwise prolific Wildmen population within reasonable limits. None of the tribes will enter the Sardonyx Mountains which lie to the south, thinking the jagged peaks to be the teeth of a gigantic earth-monster the Wildmen call Yrman. The Wildmen sometimes launch raids into the Brown Hills, though seldom to any great profit. Mounted on their swift steeds, the Jaka generally keep their distance, harrying the Wildmen with their short bows until the invaders tire of this futile exercise. On occasion, tribes of Wildmen have been known to travel far to the east, where some say they have met with greater success vs. the armies of Urag.

Along the eastern borders of Yrmania lies the flat wasteland region known as the Lost Sea. By all accounts this area does indeed appear to be a dried-up seabed, littered with the ancient skeletons of giant sea dragons and other aquatic monsters. Some claim that half-sunken sea vessels of unknown origin can be found in isolated parts of this region, many containing fabulous artifacts and treasures from a lost age. As bands of Wildmen, Darkling hordes and Ur clan war parties sometimes traverse the Lost Sea, adventurers should exercise caution, if not outright discretion, when traveling in these parts. The fearsome nocturnal strangler is reputed to be found here as well, as good a reason as should be needed for not dallying in

this region.

I can speak from experience in this regard, having spent some little time exploring the outer reaches of the Lost Sea. The Jaka hunter Tane accompanied me as guide, his initial reluctance to visit the area being offset by a mercenary fondness for gold. Narrow escapes from crazed parties of Wildmen, hunger-maddened tundra beasts and a pair of Stryx (who hovered above us like vultures for miles, hoping in vain for some fatal accident to befall our small party) marred the greater part of our journey. Then we came upon the remains of ancient wooden vessel of immense proportions, its hull and part of the prow submersed in rock-hard sediment.

Wielding axes, Tane and I cut away a tangle of petrified coral and barnacles, allowing us access to the ship's cabin. Within we found sea charts and logbooks, so old that they crumbled at the slightest touch. On the floor of the cabin was a skeleton of vaguely humanoid proportions. The tattered and rotting remnants of some sort of elaborate uniform hung loosely on its lifeless frame, a half-corroded blade of odd design still clutched in its bony hand. An attempted mutiny? A clarion call to arms? Or perhaps, a final act of swashbuckling defiance in the face of Death itself? I paused in contemplation of the fate of this archaic sea captain, whose skeletal corpse now conjured forth visions of an heroic past.

The Jaka, who was less inclined towards romanticism, had meanwhile hacked his way into the ship's hold. He returned wearing the wolfish snarl that passed for a grin among those of his race. In his hands was a rusted iron chest filled with coins, all encrusted with green and black oxides. Leading me below deck the Jaka eagerly showed me nine more chests of similar size and countless, worm-eaten wooden crates. Tane then took his axe and hacked off the top of one of the crates, revealing a dozen dust and mud-spattered flasks of aquamarine glass. That evening we sat on deck, counting stacks of gold and silver coins, and drinking wine of exceedingly rare vintage. Never before or since have I so thoroughly enjoyed a stay onboard a sea vessel.



ZANDU

Zandu is a land of gentle hills and sparse woodlands, shifting to deep forests along its northern borders and western coast. To the east lie the Onyx Mountains of Arim; to the south, the sandy shores of the Sea of Sorrow. In the interior region, groves of orange, quince and pomegranate flourish, fed by numerous small tributaries of the Sascasm River.


The people of Zandu, called the Zandir, bear a marked physical resemblance to the Aamanians, both being descended from the copper-skinned Phaedrans. Unlike their drab counterparts in Aaman, however, the Zandir are eccentric and uninhibited in nature. They enhance their features with vividly colored pigments, adorn their hair with silver bands and dress in flamboyant apparel: velvet blouses and trousers, capes of silken brocade, curl-toed boots or slippers and so forth. The womenfolk of this region practice the quaint custom of hiding their faces behind decorative fans, giving the impression that they are shy and demure. This is hardly the case, as male visitors to Zandu often discover. Zandir men are even less subtle, and in other lands are widely regarded as lechers and philanderers.

Zandu is a land diametrically opposed to Aaman in nearly all respects. For many centuries the two countries waged ceaseless war against each other,

until the establishment of “The Great Barrier Wall Treaty” (Editor’s note: See AAMAN for details on this subject). Relations between Zandu and Aaman, while relatively peaceful, are still far from cordial. The differences between the two cultures remain extreme: where the Aamanians are stern and reserved in nature, the Zandir are fiery and emotional. The Aamanians embrace the strict, monotheistic tenets of Orthodoxy; the Zandir are Paradoxists, who profess to be mystified by their own existence. The tenets of the Zandir “religion” are perhaps best explained in the Paradoxist text, “The Great Mysteries” (author unknown), a lengthy book filled with over 100,000 questions, and no answers.

Zandu is ruled by a sultan, who wields absolute and unquestioned power over all his subjects. Unlike the Hierophant of Aaman, the Sultan of Zandu is far from celibate. Zandir custom allows males to take as many wives as they can afford, and the Sultan is a very wealthy man. Zandu has no caste system, all Zandir being equally subject to the whims and moods of their ruler, which often run to the extreme.

Like Aaman, Zandu has three large cities. Zir is a naval facility built in response to the Aamanian installation at Arat. It is used now primarily by Zandir free-traders, whose single-masted sailing vessels follow the coastlines as far east as Faradun. Zadian is a fortified citadel built in response to the Aamanian fortress of Andurin. Here the bulk of



Zandu's sizeable army is stationed: ontra-riding lancers, archers and swordsmen, covered head to foot in fine chain mail of black iron.

Zanth is the capitol of Zandu, a beautiful city of copper spires, minarets and arched causeways. Like Aamahd, capitol of Aaman, Zanth was once part of the ancient Phaedran city of Badijan. Following the conclusion of the Cult Wars, Badijan was divided in two, and the Great Barrier Wall built to keep the rival factions separated. The Sultan lives in Zanth, in a fabulous palace gilt with silver and gold leaf. Adjacent to this structure is a second palace housing the Sultan's wives, which some claim exceed four thousand in number. Both palaces are attended by countless guards, eunuchs and slaves.

Of great interest in Zanth is the annual Clash of Champions held atop the Great Barrier Wall (Editor's note: Again, see AAMAN). The Sultan of Zandu considers this event to be of the utmost importance. Each year he sends forth dozens of his wizardly advisors to scour neighboring lands in search of suitable applicants for the position of champion. Prospective applicants must endure a test of their purported talents in order to be accorded serious consideration for this prestigious post. The eventual champion, chosen by process of elimination, is treated like royalty until the day of the match. It is customary for the Sultan to shower a victorious champion with fabulous riches, fame and glory. Losers rarely survive such contests, a fortunate thing indeed, given the emotional nature of the Sultan.

Zandir culture is complex and many-faceted. Musicians and artists are well thought of, the best being rewarded by appointment to the Sultan's retinue. Also in this category are the Zandir wizards who serve as seers of the Paradoxist faith (there are no priests or temples of Paradox). Elsewhere, Zandir's wizards are largely thought of as frauds and impostors. Nevertheless, the folk of Zandu rely heavily upon the advice of these individuals, as does the Sultan himself. It is little wonder, then, that the Sarista peoples consider the Zandir among the best and most gullible customers for their dubious wares.

Zandir law is harsh in some respects, and lax in others. Treason is punishable by any of an astounding variety of gruesome and slow deaths. Thieves are often exiled, or escorted by Zandir sentinels to the depths of Werewood. The Sultan personally hears all cases during the morning hours, and determines the appropriate punishment for each as the mood suits him. On a good day the Sultan may allow offenders to go free after a brief lecture on morality. On a bad day, the Zandir executioners can have their hands full. Imprisonment in the wretched dungeons of Zanth suffices as punishment in the rare instances where the Sultan can come up with no more creative form of punitive action.

Zandu has strong trade ties with Arim, a major supplier of black iron, copper, and precious stones and metals. The Zandir purchase Aht-ra and other beasts from the Djaffir, and sometimes provide financing and protection for large caravans headed to the Eastern Lands. Exports from Zandu include copper and brass utensils, exotic fragrances, spices, narcotic herbs, fine wines and opals. Blades made by the Zandir craftsmen are held in high regard throughout the continent, and are also popular trade items.

Of especial importance to the Zandir is the festival known as the "Night of Fools." Held once each year, the Night of Fools is notable for its theme: on this evening only, virtually all of Zandu's laws are temporarily rescinded, and the people allowed to do as they please. From sundown to sunrise the capital of Zanth is transformed into a veritable madhouse. Dressed up in ludicrous costumes and reeling from the effects of opiated wine (provided free of charge by Zandu's Sultan), the Zandir spend the evening in revelry, debauchery and mayhem. On the following day, order is restored, and all returns to relative normalcy.

The northern border and coastal regions of Zandu, primarily undeveloped areas, are dotted with stonework towers of varying proportions. Built prior to the fall of the ancient kingdom of Phaedra, these fortified structures once served as wilderness outposts and sanctuaries for traveling Phaedran

merchants. Most are now in ruin or in disrepair due to lack of maintenance. Some few are known to be occupied by solitary spell casters, who find isolation most suitable to their needs, tastes, or habits. The only such facility still in use as a border outpost is Zandre, a fair-sized installation which houses a contingent of Zandir scouts and is frequented by hunters, trappers and traders from the Western Lands.

Upon completion of my travels in the Eastern Lands, I returned to Zandu with the Mandalan Savant, Zen. Here I had hoped to be reunited with all my old traveling companions, but alas, such was not to be. The magician Crystabal was on hand for my arrival in Zanth, for he now maintained a residence on the outskirts of the city. According to him, the rest of my former companions had, through various means, sent word that they could not at this time come to Zandu.

The Sea-Rogue, Orianos, had forwarded his reply in the form of a Zandir merchant vessel. Evidently, he and his pirate band had captured the ship, and then released it on condition that the merchants return to Zanth, there to inform Crystabal that (for obvious reasons) he regrettably could not attend the reunion in Zanth.

Ramm, the Thrall mercenary, had dispatched a courier from the eastern borderlands with his reply. Having nothing better to do, he had signed on for another six-year tour of duty with the border patrol. As a gesture of friendship, the Thrall had also sent a gift of five Za bandit scalp locks, items valued as souvenirs among the troops stationed in the borderlands.

The Jaka hunter Tane had come to Zanth to deliver his message in person, accompanied by three ponderous Mogroth. Tane planned to return to the place where he and I had discovered the ancient Phaedran tomb and, with the help of the Mogroth, this time succeed in prying open the mausoleum's great stone portal. Through Crystabal, the Jaka assured me that a fair portion of whatever treasure might be found (minus expenses for travel, equipment, hiring the Mogroth and so on) would be sent to me at the nearest opportunity. Crystabal and

I considered the likelihood of this event actually taking place at some time in the foreseeable future to be quite dim, and laughed at the thought of it.

The three of us sat for a time, content to drink Zandir wine from silvered glasses, as was the custom among the wealthier folk of the region. Zen then asked me of my old companion, the Druas known as Shadowmoon. I, too, had been thinking of him, and wondering how he fared. I was about to mumble some vague reply, when Crystabal suddenly clapped a hand to his forehead, as if remembering some forgotten detail.

From a pouch on his belt, the magician brought forth a small parcel, which he said had been carried to Zanth by a band of Djaffir merchants. He gave it to me and I opened it, unsure of what I would find. Inside was a small globe fashioned of violet stone from the Amethyst Mountains of Shadowmoon's homeland. As I held the stone in my hand, it occurred to me that in all my travels I had never visited the Ariane city of Altan. Nor, for that matter, had I ever given thought to the unknown lands which must surely lie beyond the continent of Talislanta.

Zen looked at me, her blue-green eyes seeming to read my deepest thoughts. She said nothing, but only took my hand.

Crystabal appraised the two of us, and shrugged. He raised his glass and drained it at a single swallow. "To Altan," he said.

THE CITY OF ZANTH

"Whoever said that, 'with great freedom comes great responsibility' had obviously never visited Zanth."

- Chik Chik, Green Aeriad Creativist


(see map on page 20)

THE POPULACE

Although around 100,000 inhabitants cram the streets of Zanth at any one time, the actual

THE CITY OF ZANTH





population is incredibly difficult to ascertain. No official records are kept, and no one bothers to even consider the number of Serparians, Sarista gypsies, and other transients and unfortunates who fill the city's ghettos or live and die on the streets.

As the most open and exotic city on the continent, Zanth sees a veritable armada of foreign traders and visitors arrive and depart, night and day, from around the continent (with the obvious exception of Aaman).

HISTORY

Like Aamahd, Zanth was established on the former Phaedran capitol of Badijan, although it retained much more of the original architecture, including the former Phaedran Sorcerer-King's Palace, now the palace of His Illustrious Primacy and Grand Potentate, the Sultan of Zandu.

The most notable recent event in Zanth's history was the Great Conflagration of 601 N.A. that engulfed and gutted a small district of residences near the city's docks. Allegedly started by Heterodoxist revolutionaries, the fire raged out of control for six days and nights. Before any reconstruction could begin, the city's Serparians quickly inhabited the ruined structures. Citing lack of funds and interest in reclaiming the site, Zanth's citizens simply named the area the Serparian Slum, and left the Serparians to live there.

VISIONS OF ZANTH

A View from Afar

Gentle moors of grass, scattered with banks of vibrant flowers, small pockets of elegant forest, and wind-worn outcrops of black stone, sweep around a great, walled city. The tops of elaborate and eclectic towers peer over the stone walls, sunlight glinting off their pointed domes of copper and brass. Carts, wagons, and a stream of people make their way to and from the city's great gates, dwarfed by the gatehouse towers that stand on either side of the causeway.

At the Gates

The ancient Phaedran 60-foot wide causeway, is formed from an infinite number of thin black slabs, many cracked and worn with use. A gatehouse of

ebony stone, built as an expansion of the city's 30-foot walls, looms over the roadway. Two 20-foot, rectangular gates of brass, elaborately etched, stand permanently open between the towers. The walls thicken slightly as they rise from their 10-foot thick base, making them slope outwards.

The City Streets

Lanes of dirt teem with a bustle of people in exotic, flamboyant, outrageous or negligible attire; waves of clashing colors, assailing the eye. Buildings of every description jostle for space, plain jet stone contrasting with painted walls, carved archways, and glinting domes of copper. Beggars dress in colorful scraps, and several children in threadbare rags watch the masses appraisingly.

ZANTH AT NIGHT

The streets of Zanth still teem with activity as the veil of night descends, inebriated revelers staggering across the streets bearing torches and lanterns. Others swagger noisily with swords at their hips, while prostitutes croon from alleyways, beggars hunker in doorways, and ne'er-do-wells go about their nightly endeavors.

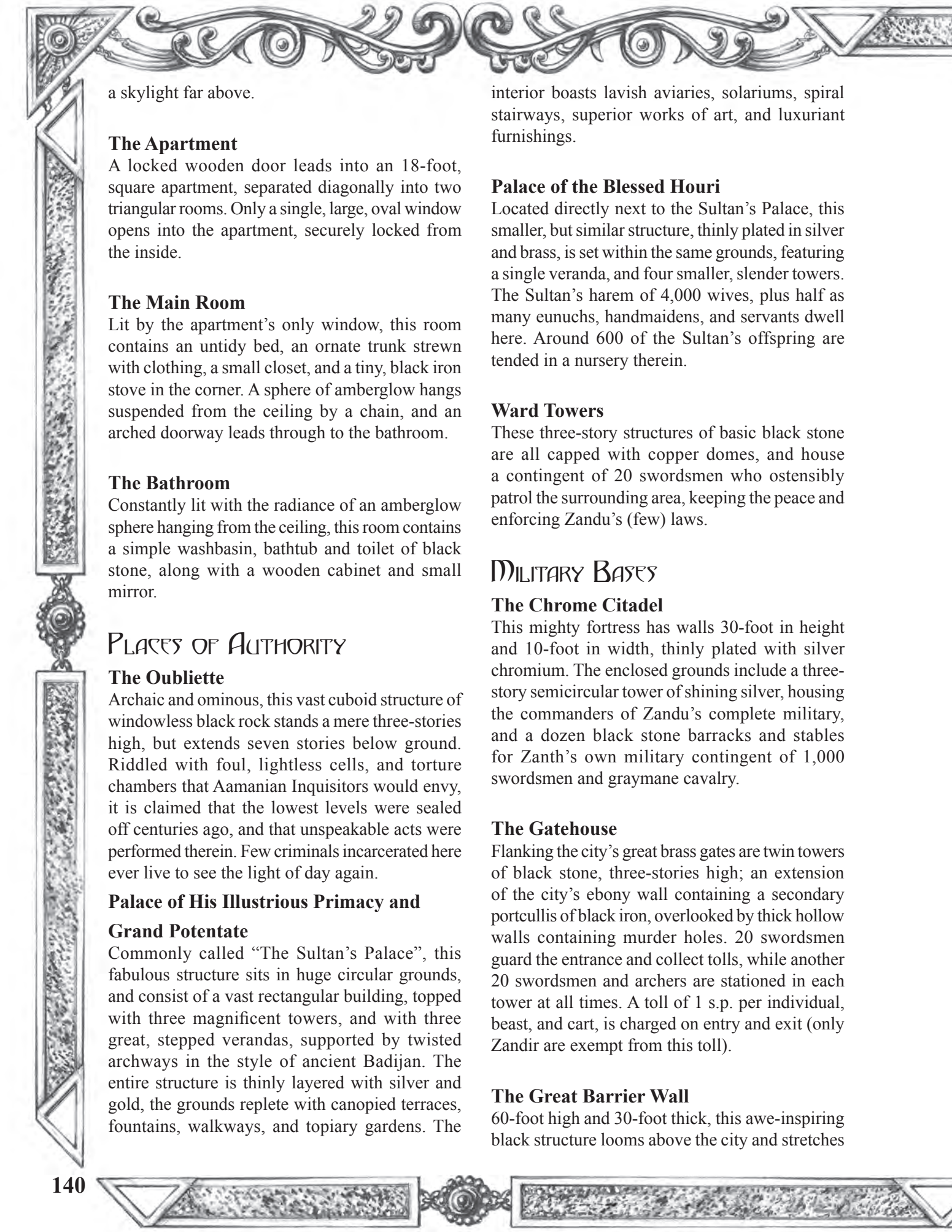
THE TYPICAL DWELLING

An Exterior View

A broad, squarish building of worn black stone gradually broadens as it rises three stories to a height of 25-foot where it flattens off. Atop the flat roof, two circular towers of black stone rise another 20-foot; each topped with a pointed copper dome. Stained glass windows dot the main building and tower at irregular intervals, some square, some arched, some round, others triangular. An oval archway, fitted with a stout door bound with copper and black iron, opens onto the main street. Long, narrow alleyways separate the building from its neighbors, littered with garbage and debris.

The Interior

The main entrance opens into a narrow hallway, leading to a small stairwell, and lined on either side with several apartment doors. Interlocking tiles line the floor, and the walls are painted with elaborate scenes illuminated by a few torches and



a skylight far above.

The Apartment

A locked wooden door leads into an 18-foot, square apartment, separated diagonally into two triangular rooms. Only a single, large, oval window opens into the apartment, securely locked from the inside.

The Main Room

Lit by the apartment's only window, this room contains an untidy bed, an ornate trunk strewn with clothing, a small closet, and a tiny, black iron stove in the corner. A sphere of amberglow hangs suspended from the ceiling by a chain, and an arched doorway leads through to the bathroom.

The Bathroom

Constantly lit with the radiance of an amberglow sphere hanging from the ceiling, this room contains a simple washbasin, bathtub and toilet of black stone, along with a wooden cabinet and small mirror.

PLACES OF AUTHORITY

The Oublette

Archaic and ominous, this vast cuboid structure of windowless black rock stands a mere three-stories high, but extends seven stories below ground. Riddled with foul, lightless cells, and torture chambers that Aamanian Inquisitors would envy, it is claimed that the lowest levels were sealed off centuries ago, and that unspeakable acts were performed therein. Few criminals incarcerated here ever live to see the light of day again.

Palace of His Illustrious Primacy and Grand Potentate

Commonly called "The Sultan's Palace", this fabulous structure sits in huge circular grounds, and consist of a vast rectangular building, topped with three magnificent towers, and with three great, stepped verandas, supported by twisted archways in the style of ancient Badijan. The entire structure is thinly layered with silver and gold, the grounds replete with canopied terraces, fountains, walkways, and topiary gardens. The

interior boasts lavish aviaries, solariums, spiral stairways, superior works of art, and luxuriant furnishings.

Palace of the Blessed Houri

Located directly next to the Sultan's Palace, this smaller, but similar structure, thinly plated in silver and brass, is set within the same grounds, featuring a single veranda, and four smaller, slender towers. The Sultan's harem of 4,000 wives, plus half as many eunuchs, handmaidens, and servants dwell here. Around 600 of the Sultan's offspring are tended in a nursery therein.

Ward Towers

These three-story structures of basic black stone are all capped with copper domes, and house a contingent of 20 swordsmen who ostensibly patrol the surrounding area, keeping the peace and enforcing Zandu's (few) laws.

MILITARY BASES

The Chrome Citadel


This mighty fortress has walls 30-foot in height and 10-foot in width, thinly plated with silver chromium. The enclosed grounds include a three-story semicircular tower of shining silver, housing the commanders of Zandu's complete military, and a dozen black stone barracks and stables for Zanth's own military contingent of 1,000 swordsmen and graymane cavalry.

The Gatehouse

Flanking the city's great brass gates are twin towers of black stone, three-stories high; an extension of the city's ebony wall containing a secondary portcullis of black iron, overlooked by thick hollow walls containing murder holes. 20 swordsmen guard the entrance and collect tolls, while another 20 swordsmen and archers are stationed in each tower at all times. A toll of 1 s.p. per individual, beast, and cart, is charged on entry and exit (only Zandir are exempt from this toll).

The Great Barrier Wall

60-foot high and 30-foot thick, this awe-inspiring black structure looms above the city and stretches



beyond, vanishing into the distance, running from the border of Arim to the Sea of Sorrow.

Towers of Eternal Vigilance

Located every 1,000-foot along the Great Barrier Wall (closer in the city of Zanth itself), these brutal towers of jet stand 70-foot high, each manned by a unit of five swordsmen and five archers who have a barracks in the tower. They keep constant watch on the border with Aaman in shifts. A magical horn in each tower is to be sounded in the event of an enemy attack, and anyone attempting to scale the wall from either side will be used as target practice. Each tower is unique in shape: round, square, oval, triangular, trapezoid, hexagonal, and so on.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Causidian Guildhall

This triangular hall is painted with abstract designs in every shade and hue of blue, and features a great door of copper inscribed repeatedly with Zandu's laws (such as they are). The interior is comfortable, if decidedly functional, with numerous small studies, and a single central hall with wooden pews and a speaker's rostrum.

Causidians form a loosely organized guild and social club of litigators, diplomats, and scribes. They are recognized by their blue attire (although style, shade, fabric, and hue vary greatly, from plain sky-blue, to marbled indigo, or patchwork blues, etc.). Their services may be obtained for a price of 10 g.l. per day - more if the Causidian has garnered even the slightest reputation.

Prospective Causidians must find an existing Causidian willing to take them as an apprentice for a year. The Causidian is free to negotiate their fee with their prospective student as they see fit, so the cost involved in obtaining the tuition varies greatly, and might also include menial work or sexual favors, instead of, or in addition to, any monetary charge.

Palaestra of the Blade

The most famed and prestigious school of swordsmanship in Zandu, the Palaestra is carved

from black stone, with the figures of warriors carved in bas-relief on every surface, and features numerous small practice halls, and a single grand hall capped with a brass dome. Extensive grounds, surrounding the main building, are used both for the practice of mounted swordsmanship, and combat on open ground. A single, large tower stands in the grounds, used for urban fighting practice. Tuition is available for all levels of skill, and costs 200 g.l. per semester (half for citizens of Zandu). Zandir who wish to join their military do not have to pay, but must enlist for a one-year term of duty immediately following graduation. Rambunctious fencing students have an intense rivalry with the local Wardens.

Paradoxist Seminary

Crafted in the shape of a broad black tower, topped with a single stained-glass window shaped like an eight-pointed star, this establishment is Zandu's erstwhile center for the study of Paradox - in actuality a school for magicians, charlatans, and self-styled seers. A large, adjacent dome (heavily warded) is used for the practice of magic. Cult doctrine is taught, along with wizardry (primarily conjuring and illusion), and certain performing and thieving talents. However, the curriculum and faculty are so hopelessly disorganized that graduates may not have acquired any appreciable skills at all. Tuition is 100 g.l. per septemester (seven weeks); halved for Zandir citizens.

Despite their varied skills, magical talents, and admitted bafflement with the nature of reality, charlatans are taken seriously in Zanth, and are often asked to give blessings to new births, provide advice (always in the form of a conundrum), and perform wedding ceremonies and funerary rites. While they don't charge for these services, those asking for their services must make a "donation" to the charlatan in accordance with just how flamboyant her performance was.

Unfortunately, some Charlatans are all too eager to exploit their official status, giving false advice (or advice that benefits them), and inspiring fear by threatening to curse those that displease them. A very rare few have even formed highly dubious cults for brief periods.

Charlatans are recognized by their combination of brocade cloak and curl-toed boots, although the style, etc, of these, and all their other apparel, varies greatly.

MUSEUMS & LIBRARIES

Immemorium

Formed by seven completely different towers, each painted a color of the rainbow, and interconnected with arched walkways, the Immemorium is Zanth's museum. Contained within are great works of art, displays of cultural items from across the continent, and Paradoxist artifacts from the Cult Wars, as well as tomes by such Phaedran luminaries as Kabros, Thystram, and Sassan. Admission costs 5 s.p. each, and security is paranoid, including skilled guards, alarms, and traps, both magical and mundane.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Enigma Tabernacle

Zanth's only "temple", the Tabernacle is a large monument of veined quartz from the Crystal Mountains. Standing atop a circular plinth of 25 stone steps, the Tabernacle is 150-foot in diameter, and 100-foot high, with 500 slender pillars filling its entire area, topped with a gold-plated dome. No services are held here and no clergy are in attendance. Zandir come here as the mood takes them, to read the pillars, each of which is carved with countless unanswered questions. The monument is a favorite trysting place among lovers.

MARKETS & BAZAARS

Bizarre Bazaar

This open area of interlocking black paving is frequented by traders from many lands: Gnomekin crystal merchants, Aeriad horticulturists, Kasmiran trapmages, Cymrilian enchanters, Farad slave mongers, Sarista fortune-tellers and street performers, Jaka trappers, Zandir spice traders, Arimite ore-dealers, and many others. The stalls, ablaze with torchlight, are busy into the night, as are the numerous pickpockets and con men.

TRADERS, ARTISANS & MERCHANTS

Areola Imbroglia

This circular shop is painted in a patchwork of clashing colors, and surrounded by a dozen identical doors, only one of which is real. Dusty and dim, it is cluttered with magical paraphernalia, alchemical ingredients, and scattered copies of Paradoxist literature (including several editions of the cult manifesto, the Book of Mysteries). Prices for any of the eclectic shop's contents vary greatly.

Devils' Bane Brass

Completely covered in interlocking disks of copper and brass, this shop produces and sells common utensils of copper and brass, including plates, cutlery, tankards, belt buckles, lengths of chain, and even basic jewelry, such as bangles and torcs. Quality and price are typically low to average, but ordered pieces are of good quality, often with basic decoration, and are of 1.5 x standard price.

Essence of Life, Spice Emporium

This large, unadorned black building contains dozens of small, open casks filled to the brim with spices it buys in bulk. Entry costs 1 s.p., and customers are given several small paper bags (each capable of holding no more than 0.5lb of spice), and a scoop to select what spices they want. The bags are checked on exit, and the customer charged. Prices are low (x 0.6 average), but customers are watched constantly to ensure there is no theft.

Finesse

This small copper dome, ringed by 10 slender minarets, is Zanth's finest costumer. Specializing in masks, elaborate costumes, and other stylish apparel in the finest of materials, it also sells fine fragrances, and employs some of the most skilled body painters. Most apparel and fragrances are available at x2 standard prices, and made-to-order outfits can cost several times this. Body painting varies in cost according to detail and size (20-200 g.l.).

Grand Estates

Consisting of a single opulent office in a wealthier home, this establishment is owned by Samarr, a wealthy Zandir merchant who sells parcels of land, refurbished manses, and abandoned tower keeps. Most of these properties are situated along the northern border or ocean coast - not exactly preferred locations, though the low prices (5000 to 50,000 g.l.) are not unappealing.

Opulence

Its etched black walls polished to a smooth sheen, this shop sells jewelry of remarkable detail and unique design from any metal or gemstone. Prices are high (x2), and opals a specialty.

Robalo's

Scenic vineyards surround the hexagonal gardens of this elaborate mansion and distillery; one of the country's most respected wineries. Robalo's offers excellent vintage wines at reasonable cost. Weekly tours of the vineyards cost 1 s.p., and are a popular attraction, the free samples contributing to the general lack of sobriety in this area.

Second Skin

Painted in bright emerald and scarlet, this hole-in-the-wall shop can only be entered via a dingy side alley. It sells furs, hides, and leathers of the best quality from nearly every kind of animal on the continent, and also makes surpassing custom clothing and fetish gear from such materials (at costs x3 standard). Their lapis lazuli suede boots, and serpis leather coats are very popular.

Zelado's

Zelado blades are considered the finest on the continent, and Zelado iron is always of excellent grade. This small, converted apartment block contains a dozen forges, and has been run by the Zelado family for many generations (the family inhabit the gilt-capped towers above the forges). Prices are x2 standard (x3 or higher for custom work), but the quality is beyond compare.

Zenith

This tiny shop is located in the top two floors of a single, slender tower that stands 40-foot high,

the lower half of which contains nothing but an elaborate spiral staircase permitting access to the shop above. Lit by several dozen colored irregular windows, and topped with a twisting copper dome, this shop sells softer drugs and beautifully crafted water pipes, hookahs, and pipes at modest prices (x 0.8 standard).

PARKS

The Marvelous Menagerie

Set atop a vast verge of grass, enclosed by a high iron fence, the Menagerie is a combination zoological garden and park. Paths of stone form a circuit that passes over a dozen enclosures, aviaries, aquariums and cages of intricate design, wrought in black iron and toughened glass. Exotic beasts from around the continent are kept here, cared for by Jaka beastmasters. Admission at the gates costs 1 s.p. per person.

INNS, TAVERNS & RESTAURANTS

The Caged Skank

This popular bar is unremarkable, save for the small spherical cage that hangs just inside the entrance. The cage is inhabited much of the time by a skank called Grinch, who enjoys making lewd remarks, and telling tales of dubious veracity. His high pitched singing often accompanies the inn's musical entertainment. Prices and quality are average, but the atmosphere is relaxed and congenial.

Exquisitorium

This high-class, members-only restaurant, has numerous elegant towers capped in gold, interconnected with delicate, carved arches. The atmosphere and decor are rich, tasteful, and restrained, with Bodorian musicians providing musical accompaniment to the meals. Security is strict, as is the dress code (only the most expensive and fashionable garments are permitted), but many of the city's most influential citizens dine here. Costs are astronomic (x10 standard). How anyone becomes a member is a well-kept secret.

Flashing Blades

With its name, and the crossed sabers that hang above the doorway, it is easy to guess that the clientele of this inn comprise of swordsmen and Certaments. Furniture of colorful hardwoods fills the bar, marred by the strikes of many duels. The place has a swaggering atmosphere, full of dedicated carousing, tall tales, and hot-tempered duels. Prices are 10% above average (to help offset property damage costs), quality is fair, and house wines abundant.

The Greater Sun

This middle-class tavern features a spherical sign of wrought iron and etched crystal, lit from within by a constantly burning fire. Quality is good, but prices are 1.5 x standard. Many of the city's artisans, merchants, magicians, and Causidians frequent here, dictating that much of the inn's gossip centers around current prices, the quality of imported materials, etc.

The Lesser Sun

Located directly across the street from The Greater Sun (see above), this basic, working-class tavern features a small spherical sign of wrought iron, lit from within by dozens of amberglow spheres. The prices and atmosphere are cheap, rude, and cheerful (x0.75 normal), and the customers are mainly lower class-laborers.

The Lucky Shaitan

With a sign depicting a Shaitan in ménage à trois with two naked women, it should come as no surprise to learn that this seedy bar includes a striptease platform and lap-dancers. However, the dancers are strict professionals, and will not involve themselves with patrons. Admittance costs 1 g.l. per person, though prices for food and drink are average.

Manse of the Sublime Mysteries

This splendid inn and tavern has been converted from an old Phaedran mansion of black stone, three-stories high, with numerous rooms and bars, decorated with colorful and diaphanous curtains, drapes, and velvet furnishings. All who enter must wear a mask of one sort or the other, adding

a certain mystique to the atmosphere. Bodorian musicians, thespians, and acrobats, provide jocular entertainment. Quality is above average, as are the prices (x2 standard).

Quicksilver

This moderate, single-story building of black stone, topped with a copper minaret, features an open kitchen behind a bar, and dozens of stools, and is open 24 hours a day. It specializes in creating quick meals, served in paper baskets. A single serving of Zash - herby provender fries, with a spicy sauce filled with chunks of meat, mushrooms, or other vegetables - costs a mere 2 s.p. and is served hot within two minutes of ordering.

Werewood Tavern

With a wooden sign carved with a disturbing face, a truly diverse clientele frequents this inn and tavern: Arimite knife-fighters, Jaka manhunters, Zandir charlatans and thieves, with a few swordsmen thrown in. Fare is reasonable in price and quality. The large common room holds contests of strength, skill, and magical prowess. Private booths are available (1 g.l.) and frequently used by certain disreputable types for greater secrecy.

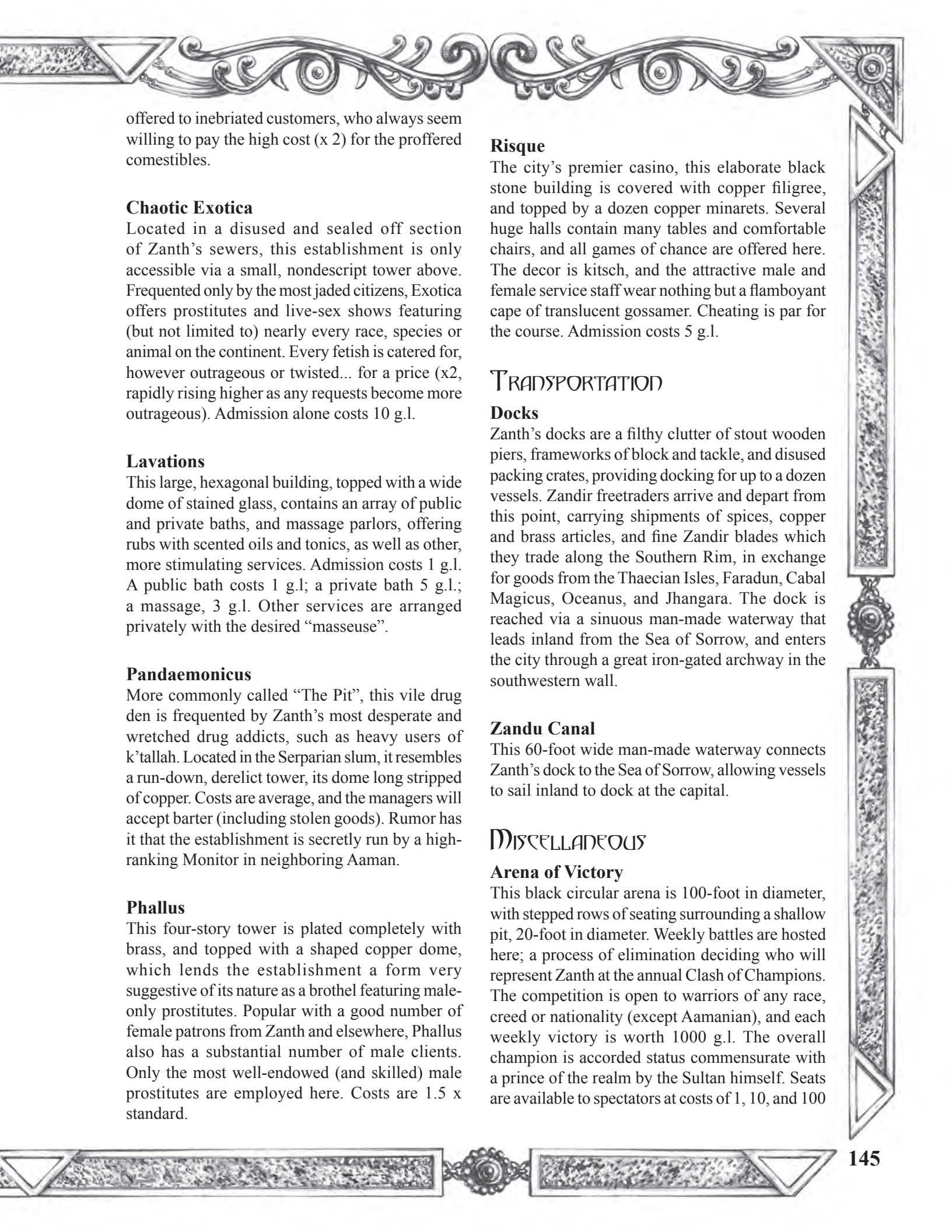
DENS OF INEQUITY

Anaais

This luxurious pleasure palace is run by a Batrean paramour called Aleana (see Tal10, pp. 264). 55-foot in height, this trapezium-shaped establishment of delicately carved jet stone, contains six stories, and a variety of facilities, including an indoor pool, saunas, private jacuzzis, nymphariums, and a rooftop topiary garden enclosed with glass. All manner of tasteful, erotic entertainment is featured, along with the best wines and food, although prices are exorbitant (x10 normal).

Bliss

This oval building is topped with a ring of six brass-capped towers, and painted over every surface with whorls of color. Each of its many rooms is filled with silk cushions, and any drug is available here at costs only 20% higher than normal. The air is an intoxicating haze. Candies and spiced wines are



offered to inebriated customers, who always seem willing to pay the high cost (x 2) for the proffered comestibles.

Chaotic Exotica

Located in a disused and sealed off section of Zanth's sewers, this establishment is only accessible via a small, nondescript tower above. Frequented only by the most jaded citizens, Exotica offers prostitutes and live-sex shows featuring (but not limited to) nearly every race, species or animal on the continent. Every fetish is catered for, however outrageous or twisted... for a price (x2, rapidly rising higher as any requests become more outrageous). Admission alone costs 10 g.l.

Lavations

This large, hexagonal building, topped with a wide dome of stained glass, contains an array of public and private baths, and massage parlors, offering rubs with scented oils and tonics, as well as other, more stimulating services. Admission costs 1 g.l. A public bath costs 1 g.l.; a private bath 5 g.l.; a massage, 3 g.l. Other services are arranged privately with the desired "masseuse".

Pandaemonicus

More commonly called "The Pit", this vile drug den is frequented by Zanth's most desperate and wretched drug addicts, such as heavy users of k'tallah. Located in the Serparian slum, it resembles a run-down, derelict tower, its dome long stripped of copper. Costs are average, and the managers will accept barter (including stolen goods). Rumor has it that the establishment is secretly run by a high-ranking Monitor in neighboring Aaman.

Phallus

This four-story tower is plated completely with brass, and topped with a shaped copper dome, which lends the establishment a form very suggestive of its nature as a brothel featuring male-only prostitutes. Popular with a good number of female patrons from Zanth and elsewhere, Phallus also has a substantial number of male clients. Only the most well-endowed (and skilled) male prostitutes are employed here. Costs are 1.5 x standard.

Risque

The city's premier casino, this elaborate black stone building is covered with copper filigree, and topped by a dozen copper minarets. Several huge halls contain many tables and comfortable chairs, and all games of chance are offered here. The decor is kitsch, and the attractive male and female service staff wear nothing but a flamboyant cape of translucent gossamer. Cheating is par for the course. Admission costs 5 g.l.

TRANSPORTATION

Docks

Zanth's docks are a filthy clutter of stout wooden piers, frameworks of block and tackle, and disused packing crates, providing docking for up to a dozen vessels. Zandir freetraders arrive and depart from this point, carrying shipments of spices, copper and brass articles, and fine Zandir blades which they trade along the Southern Rim, in exchange for goods from the Thaecian Isles, Faradun, Cabal Magicus, Oceanus, and Jhangara. The dock is reached via a sinuous man-made waterway that leads inland from the Sea of Sorrow, and enters the city through a great iron-gated archway in the southwestern wall.

Zandu Canal

This 60-foot wide man-made waterway connects Zanth's dock to the Sea of Sorrow, allowing vessels to sail inland to dock at the capital.

MISCELLANEOUS

Arena of Victory

This black circular arena is 100-foot in diameter, with stepped rows of seating surrounding a shallow pit, 20-foot in diameter. Weekly battles are hosted here; a process of elimination deciding who will represent Zanth at the annual Clash of Champions. The competition is open to warriors of any race, creed or nationality (except Aamanian), and each weekly victory is worth 1000 g.l. The overall champion is accorded status commensurate with a prince of the realm by the Sultan himself. Seats are available to spectators at costs of 1, 10, and 100

g.l. (depending on proximity to the center).

Clash of Champions Platform

The annual Clash of Champions takes place on this large stone platform that stands directly over the central tollgate of The Great Barrier Wall. The stone platform is 20-foot in diameter, perfectly level, and has no safety barrier. Incautious combatants can be forced off the edge to plummet to injury or death. It is considered a particular coup to cause a vanquished foe to fall amongst their own supporters.

Toll Gates

Supported on either side by solid black pillars of monolithic proportion, three unadorned and monumental gates of copper, 30-foot in height, directly link Zanth and Aamahd through the Great Barrier Wall's only opening. Each gate is operated and overlooked by a gatehouse located within the great flanking pillars. Standing directly above the central of the three gates is a small stone platform: the site of the annual Clash of Champions.

The country whose representative wins the annual Clash of Champions is awarded proprietorship of the wall for one year, including the right to collect toll revenues through the Toll Gates. By mutual agreement, the toll may not exceed 1 g.l. per person, animal, or conveyance.

Sarista Ghetto

Formerly a public park, this area is enclosed by a crumbling circular wall, the grassy interior segmented by arched black walls radiating from a central hub paved with black stone. Now taken over by Sarista gypsies, their colorful wagons, tents and campfires are scattered throughout the area. Many Zandir come here to have their fortunes told, buy gypsy charms, or watch them perform. The Sarista have affiliated themselves with the Serparians, and pay the usual due to the Sultan of Beggars.

Serparian Slum

Consisting of the fire-gutted, skeletal remains of 17 buildings overlooking an open area of barren ground, the Serparian Slum is strewn with

refuse; crude lean-tos abutted to the buildings' walls. Zanth's Serparians (beggars) live here in abysmal squalor. According to popular belief, the Sultan of Beggars dwells at the secret heart of the slum, overseeing the allocation of prime begging territory, and the running of a citywide network of thugs, thieves, and information gatherers.

Silent Necropolis

50-foot high, with five levels and an underground crematorium, this huge black structure is shaped like a stretched oval, painstakingly etched, carved, and inlaid with copper depicting the luminaries of the Ten Thousand. Two vaulted open arches lead inside. Each level is filled with row upon row of black stone shelves bearing brass funerary urns; white marble slabs set into the walls inscribed with the names of Zanth's dead. The bottom floor is dedicated to the untold thousands of Paradoxists who died during the Cult Wars.

Stadia of Champions

These immense walled 40-foot structures contain 13 steps each, built to afford seating to spectators viewing the Clash of Champions. The top step is canopied, and reserved for individuals of importance and wealth from Zandu and beyond, each paying 100 g.l. for the privilege (spyglass included). Vendors hawking Zash, alcohol, and spyglasses (25 g.l. each) circulate freely during the annual event, as do pickpockets. The stadia go unused throughout the rest of the year.

NOTABLE CITIZENS

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

Captain Zirago Vey - Zandir Sea Captain

When in port, Captain Vey is one of the more colorful figures in the dockyard. His brass arm, an enchanted relic of ancient origin, is adept at flinging knives and slapping barmaid's bottoms - Zirago says it has a mind of its own. His ship, the Fountain of Dust, regularly risks the voyage to the Dark Coast, returning with a variety of rare goods.

Cilia Aquatine - Batrean Paramour and Sultan's Wife

The Sultan's newest wife and current infatuation, Cilia affects an aquatic look, dressing entirely in seashells and braided seaweed, and having her green-dyed hair magically coifed so that it seems to be moving in a current. The Sultan has no idea that Cilia was once an Arimite's paramour, or that Revenant agents are seeking for her.

The Saffron-Masked Wizard - Zandir

Charlatan and Burglar

The identity of the master of ceremonies at the Manse of Sublime Mysteries remains unknown, though speculation matches him with the Sultan of Zandu, several well-known mages, or even the Hierophant of Aaman on holiday! He is actually Nighthand, a Zandir charlatan who leads a number of 'other lives' - including one as a daring burglar.

Argot Trasmaniu - Zandir Oublette

Guard

Damaged by alchemical exhalations as a youth, the asocial Argot has a sinister rasping voice. He enjoys his work, and often talks to familiar stones and vermin that squirm underfoot. What few understand is that Argot actually can communicate with certain rocks and insects.

Joyila Orto - Zandir Causidian

This begemmed and necklaced older Causidian, pudgy with the rewards of a successful legal practice, now dedicates his time to serving the poor at minimal charges - in fact, he almost forces himself upon his clients. His obsession with fairness outweighs his loyalty to those he defends, as he has been known to "accidentally" betray convicting confidences.

Ustreya - Famed Zandir Escort

Although notably overweight, Ustreya is still attractive, and has gained fame as one of Zanth's most skilled escorts and prostitutes. It is said that she can pleasure a person like no other, and given

her huge popularity among Zanth's wealthier citizens (both male and female), the rumor might well be true; it is certainly acknowledged that her charms are abundant. Despite her public profile, Ustreya is a sensitive and warm-hearted individual.

Sarissimi - Sarista Rogue

This flirtatious and irascible gypsy spends every winter in the Zanth ghetto, working with the animals she performs with during her summer tour. The highlight of the act is a trained urhound, which bounds from the back of one ogriphant to another through a ring of fire. Her mascot is a sarcastic ravier named Octar.

Wyleth - Zandir Charlatan and Dean of Enticement

A young man of pallid complexion and weak constitution, Wyleth is the Paradoxist Seminary's Dean of Enticement. It is said that he can, for a price, manipulate the heart of the most aloof or remote person. Oddly enough, he is believed to live alone in a hilltop manse, and has no known romantic entanglements.

Kar Vlasi - Zandir Swordsman Unit

Leader

Crude and lewd, Kar is entrusted with breaking in troops new to the Chrome Citadel. She constantly challenges her soldiers to new achievements in order to earn glory: stealing the pennant of another unit, clandestinely raiding into Aamahd, or patrolling the worst sections of Zanth after midnight. Her troops gave her the nickname "Old Mangonel" in reference to her looks.

Natromo - Zandir Serparian (Forsaken)

Although only 13 years of age, Natromo has lived his entire life on the streets of Zanth, having been abandoned by a mother he never knew. Savvy and mature beyond his years, he projects an extremely cynical but artful demeanor, hiding the fact that he deeply cares for those Forsaken younger than he. A truly skilled pickpocket, he considers himself fortunate that he hasn't had to sell himself to survive.

Quicksilver - Flamboyant Zandir

Highwayman

Quicksilver is rapidly gaining fame as a highwaymen possessed of abundant charm, wit, daring, style, and panache. Formerly a Certament, his real name is Kamaris, and he cuts an impressive figure in his billowing black velvet cape, embroidered white silk shirt, and dashing hood and mask. He gets his name from the speed with which he wields his saber: a fine black iron blade engraved all over with inlay of silver.

Corissi Deklan - Zandir Certament

Protagonist

Predatory and lithe, with seductive leathers, and a dangerous sensuality few men can resist, Corissi always causes a stir. Unfortunately, she makes her living by dueling lecherous fools who make crude advances at her, placing wagers on her own victory. All she needs is an excuse to make a challenge, and over-amorous Zandir men inevitably fall right into her hands.

SEAS, OCEANS, RIVERS, AND LAKES

THE AZURE OCEAN

A wide expanse of deep-blue water, the Azure Ocean lies to the southwest of the Talislantan continent. Though it's far southern reaches remain largely unknown, the Azure is otherwise the most traveled of Talislanta's seas and oceans. Zandir and Aamanian merchant ships, Imrian slave vessels, and the sea-rogues of Gao-Din all are known to frequent these waters. On rare occasions, Thaecian pleasure barges or sea nomads from Oceanus may be encountered. Storm demons are distressingly common during the spring and fall months, less so during other times of the year.

THE FAR SEAS

Situated to the southeast of Talislanta, the Far Seas are also well-traveled. They are considered

dangerous due to the presence of Mangar corsairs, sea-demons and other malefic entities. As the black-hulled ships of the Black Savants of Nefaratus will allow passage through their territorial waters only to Imrian vessels, ships headed to Quan must take the longer and more hazardous open-sea routes. Golden-sailed dragon barques patrol the Quan coasts, seeking out smugglers, corsairs, and others who might pose some threat to the interests of the Quan Empire.

THE INLAND SEA

The Inland Sea is a large and scenic body of water located in the central regions of the Quan Empire. Slaves of the Empire pole these waters in search of moonfish, a delicacy deemed suitable only for the refined palates of the ruling class Quan. Kang sentinels patrol the shores of the Inland Sea, keeping a keen eye out for poachers. The coral city of Isallis, home of the Sunra, lies at the center of the Inland Sea.

THE LOST SEA

Once known as the Northern Sea, the Lost Sea is a flat expanse of wasteland ringed by the mountains of Narandu and Yrmania. The demise of the Northern Sea occurred sometime around the beginning of the Age of Confusion, the cause of this calamity remaining a source of heated debate among Talislantan scholars. Arguments range from the "crack in the world theory" (through which the waters of the sea seeped away) to the idea that advancing hordes of Ice Giants froze all the sea's tributaries, thus causing it to dry up. Whatever its origins, the Lost Sea is a strange region, littered with half-sunken ships and the bones of ancient sea dragons. Its former tributaries have also gone dry (see The Dead River).

THE MIDNIGHT SEA

A dark and ominous stretch of water, the Midnight Sea is located to the northwest of the Talislantan mainland. Those who travel its waters are few in number, and with good reason: ancient sea dragons lie sleeping beneath the waves, patiently awaiting their next meal. Sailors who have braved the Midnight Sea claim that phantom ships from the

long-dead Kingdom of Khazad ply the ink-black waters, their spectral crews doomed to wander for all eternity.

THE SEA OF GLASS

Located in Faradun, the Sea of Glass is not a body of water, but a flat expanse of fused, green glass. The Cymrilians operate a mining installation on the western “shore” of the “sea.” Otherwise, few bother to come here. (Note: As mentioned previously, these mining facilities are now all but silent; the result of the current political tension between Faradun and Cymril – Quen)

THE SEA OF ICE

An ever-frozen body of water, the Sea of Ice is considered part of L’Haan. The Mirin “sail” across the Sea of Ice on ice schooners equipped with long, adamantine-plated runners.

THE SEA OF MADNESS

A turbulent and seemingly malevolent body of water situated to the northeast of the Talislantan continent, the Sea of Madness lies beyond the territorial waters of the Quan Empire. Few ships dare to venture into these waters, which are said to be subject to strange and inexplicable phenomena: raging storms of black lightning, maelstroms, spiraling columns of water, and other less easily defined occurrences. Sea dragons and other frightening creatures are likewise rumored to prowl these waters. There is a legend to the effect that a large island, known as Temesia lies at the furthest reaches of the Sea of Madness (see THE UNKNOWN LANDS).

THE SEA OF SORROW

A sizeable body of water almost entirely surrounded by land, the Sea of Sorrow is named for the many thousands of men lost long ago in sea battles between the Zandir and Aamanians. It is now a bustling waterway, used primarily by the merchant vessels of both nations. The hulks of sunken warships and merchants (many holding valuable treasures) litter the sea bed, and are a lure to salvage-men, scavengers, and adventurous sorts.

FROZEN LAKES

These ice-bound lakes-named Lahsa, Myr, Rhin, Y’Lal, and Lir -- are all located in the far northern land of L’Haan. The blue-skinned Mirin peoples often engage in ice-fishing on these lakes, employing double-bladed ice skiffs as a means of transport across the frozen expanses.

LAKE VENDA


Source of the Axis River, Lake Venda lies at the foot of the Onyx Mountains in Arim. Fed by numerous small streams and brooks, its waters are cold and clear. Despite its seemingly peaceful appearance, the lake is avoided by the Arimites, who claim it to be cursed. According to legend, Lake Venda is inhabited by nine great Shaitan. They live in the ruins of an ancient, sunken city, and prey upon unwary sailors and fishermen. Each is said to possess a fabulous treasure: one of the Nine Keys of Knowledge, or one of the Devil-Rings of Oriax, depending upon which of the many conflicting accounts one wishes to believe.

LAKE ZEPHYR

Lake Zephyr is a beautiful and placid body of water located in Astar of the Seven Kingdoms. Many of Astar’s Muses live around the lake, which is considered a capital of sorts. The thaumaturges of Carantheum come here to purchase water which is magically transmuted to solid blocks and shipped to the eastern deserts.

THE AXIS RIVER

A slate-grey river that flows slowly from the Onyx Mountains of Arim to the Azure Ocean, the Axis is heavily traveled by traders from Arim, Aaman and the Seven Kingdoms. Barges loaded with Arimite ores ply the river to the north, while the tiny cogs and punts of the Jhangarans and the barge forts of the Blue Aeriad are most numerous along the southern end. Though very wide, the Axis River is quite shallow in spots. Only small or flat-bottomed craft can navigate its entire length in safety. Dozens of small tributaries of the Axis River run through the Swamplands of Mog, a



branch of the Axis forming the southern border of the Seven Kingdoms.

THE DEAD RIVER

The Dead River was once the greatest waterway on the continent, until its source, the Northern Sea, inexplicably went dry (see The Lost Sea). It is now a winding chasm which extends some miles and nearly bisects the whole of Talislanta.

Forming a natural boundary line from Urag to Faradun, the crevasse ranges in depth from about fifty to two hundred feet. It is bridged at several points, the most reliable of which include Sindar and Kasmir of the Seven Kingdoms and Danuvia. The Dead River is shallowest in Urag and to the south, where crossings suitable for wagons and mounts can sometimes be found. In numerous places, it can only be forded on foot, a task requiring some skill in the art of rock climbing. The chasm forms a natural trail, however, and may be traversed throughout much of its length without great difficulty.

THE NECROS RIVER

The Necros River runs from the mountains of Khazad through the western forests of Werewood, emptying into the ocean at the Zandu border. The river forms a boundary of sorts, separating Werewood from the woodlands of Silvanus. Wood and rope bridges, most erected by the Sarista tribes, span the river at various points. The waters of the Necros, which originate from the eerie land of Khazad, are believed to be unsafe to drink. Some claim that more than a sip or two will cause the drinker to experience terrifying nightmares.

THE RIVER SHAN

The River Shan flows south from the northern coast of Quan to the Inland Sea, through Chana, and into the Far Seas. Narrow and treacherous at its southernmost end, the Shan is generally traveled only by Sunra fishing vessels and the pleasure craft and dragon barques of the Quan Empire.

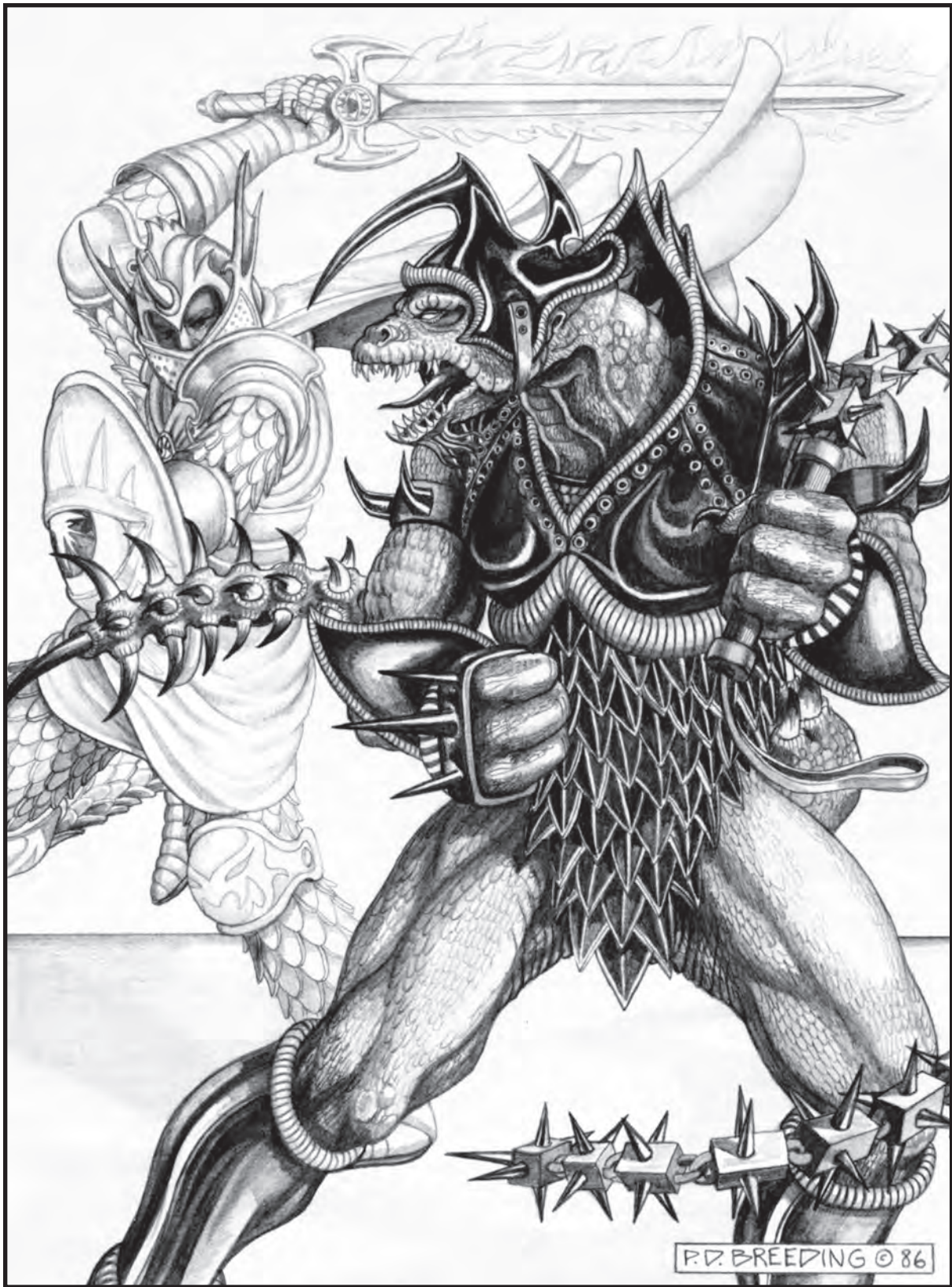
THE SASCASM RIVER

Sascasm flows from the Sardonyx Mountains of

Yrmania through Werewood and Zandu. Slow moving and murky, the Sascasm divides in Werewood, one arm of the river terminating west of Arim in most unusual fashion: the waters simply disappear into a great sinkhole known as the Dead Lagoon. Lurkers and other insidious creatures dwell in the lagoon, which is strenuously avoided by reasonable folk. According to an old Dhuna legend, this part of the Sascasm does not actually terminate at the Dead Lagoon, but merely goes underground, its hidden tributaries flowing on for many miles. While most scholars denounce the Dhuna tale as pure nonsense, others consider this purported network of underground rivers, lakes, and grottos to be within the realm of possibility.

THE SYLVAN RIVER

Flowing south from Zephyr Lake in Astar, the Sylvan River winds its way through the Swamps of Mog and into the Gulf of Raj. The waterway is difficult for any but the smallest craft to navigate, this due to a proliferation of tangled roots, silt deposits, and chunks of flotsam. Lurkers, poisonous snakes, and other unsavory creatures are likewise a deterrent to sensible travelers.



THE UNKNOWN LANDS

The following appendices were compiled from the notes of the wizard, Tamerlin. For the benefit of the reader, a guide to the pronunciation of Talislantan names and places has been included at the end of this book. As the only available source of reference was Tamerlin's chronicles, the accuracy and reliability of this guide may indeed be moot issues.

ABOUT ARCHAËUS

In addition to the many strange and wondrous places described in the preceding text, a number of legends hint at the existence of lands rumored to lie far to the east and west of the Talislantan continent. As yet unexplored by the folk of Talislanta, who for the most part have a superstitious aversion to the open sea, these Unknown Lands present fertile ground for the aspiring explorer. What little is known of these places shall be related to the reader, though the veracity of these accounts is currently beyond the author's ability to ascertain. Gods willing, a voyage to one or more of the Unknown Lands may lie in my own future. In truth, however, the author has somewhat less of a liking for sailing ships and uncharted waters than the average Talislantan.

THE MIDNIGHT REALM

Beyond the Midnight Sea is said to lie the Midnight Realm, a region where darkness ever prevails over light. This, some say, is the home of the Night Demons, who dwell in towers of black basalt. Their ruler, who is called the Lord of the Night Skies, is rumored to be a wealthy and powerful necromancer. Rivers of molten iron are said to run across the land, emptying into the dark waters of the Midnight Sea in a torrent of slag and steam. The nature of the tales concerning the Midnight Realm is such that it is little wonder that few have ever shown any marked desire to explore this region.

SIMBAR

A legend much in favor with the folk of Quan

describes the land of Simbar, which lies "far to the northeast, where the Sea of Madness gives way to the peaceful blue waters of the Sea of Serenity." According to the Quan, Simbar is "a splendid land, whose people live in ruby-colored castles, and sail the seas in crystal ships." The ancient Phaedran scholars, being somewhat less optimistic, described Simbar as home to "the ruins of a once-glorious, but now faded, civilization. The ghosts of its long-dead population still haunt Simbar's cities, jealously guarding those things which they once held so dear in their hearts: namely, chests of silver, gold, and gems." If indeed the land of Simbar does exist, it must lie beyond Temesia, an island supposedly haunted by Panic Demons. This alone might provide sufficient motivation to avoid traversing the seas which lie between Simbar and Talislanta. Some believe that the legendary kingdom of Acimera is to be found in this region.

TEMESIA

Temesia is a large island believed to be located somewhere in the Sea of Madness. According to one account, written by the popular Zandir poet, Rajni Rajim, the isle is "hung in mist, and covered in blue jungle. Silver dragonflies glide above the isle, and metallic blue iron-trees sway in the wind; their clanging, clashing leaves sending showers of crimson sparks into the night sky. Quicksilver streams flow swiftly down the sides of the Mountain of Brass, wherein live the inhabitants of Temesia: the horrid, one-eyed beings known as Panic Demons. On leathery wings they circle high above, seeking creatures of flesh and blood to feed upon. Their inhuman, shrieking cries rend the air, traveling for miles on the wind. To hear the call of the Panic Demons, it is said, is to know the meaning of fear."

ALHAMBRA

West beyond the waters of the Azure Ocean is believed to lie the fabled land of Alhambra, a place mentioned in many of the most ancient Talislantan legends. Accounts vary greatly concerning the

nature of Alhambra's inhabitants: some claim that sub-elementals (creatures of ice, mud, smoke, mist, or some other elemental substance) originate from this region. Others say that two great nations, called Randun and Kharistan, are to be found here. It is said that the two countries war against each other ceaselessly, and will one day succeed in completely annihilating each other. An old folk tale, which may or may not be true, describes Alhambra as "a land of smoke-grey hills and plains. Slugs and beetles, some as large and squat as wagons, slither across the bleak landscape. Below the ground live the Undermen: blind subterraneans, white as ghosts, with yellow claws and fangs. They hide in shallow holes, waiting to snare luckless creatures with their pole-hooks and drag them far below ground."

GLOSSARY OF TALISLANTAN TERMS

Aamanian: A citizen of Aaman. Colloquially a derogatory term meaning "fanatic," "prudish," or "intolerant," depending on the context in which the word is used.

Ahazu: Any of a race of four-armed, warlike savages native to the Eastern Jungles of the Dark Coast.

Ahtra: A species of burden beast bred by the nomadic Djaffir tribes of Djaffa. There are three sub-species of Ahtra: the one-humped Ontra, the two-humped Batra, and the three-humped Tatra.

Amberglass: A fine glass derived from raw amber or amber crystal, having many practical applications in various magical, alchemical and thaumaturgical operations.

Aquavit: effervescent liquor popular in Cymril of the Seven Kingdoms.

Araq: A sorcerous crossbreed of Sauran and man, generally exhibiting the worst traits of these two races.

Aeriad: A species of former avians, now in the process of "devolving" into a race of ground-dwellers. There are two sub-species: the smaller Green Aeriad, and the larger Blue Aeriad. Both retain vestigial wings and head-crests of bright, metallic-hued plumes.

Ariane: A humanoid people dwelling within the Maze-City of Altan in Tamaranth, notable as practitioners of the metaphysical doctrines of Trans-Ascendancy (q.v.).

Arimite: A citizen of Arim. Elsewhere, the term is loosely used to describe any type of vicious cut-throat.

Armored Leech: Popular name for the Aramatus; a segmented, serpentine creature which dwells in bogs and sewers and feeds on carrion, refuse and-as the opportunity warrants-living prey.

Avar: The Farad's deity of wealth and personal gain, typically depicted as a golden idol with outstretched, grasping hands.

Azoryl: A species of winged reptilians native to the Sinking Land and neighboring regions.

Batrean: A race of primitive humanoids inhabiting the island of Batre. The females are alluring creatures of exceptional charm and beauty; the males, huge and repugnant monsters with a tendency towards violent behavior.

Bat Manta: A species of extra-dimensional creatures resembling giant manta rays. Categorized as lesser demons by some Talislantan scholars, Bat Manta are capable of flight, and are employed as steeds by certain black magicians.

Beastmen: A species of bestial humanoids native to the Plains of Golarin. Omnivorous creatures, Beastmen scavenge the numerous ruined cities and structures which dot the Plains region, traveling in large packs.

Black Pit of Narandu: Purportedly a bottomless fissure located in the south-central region of Narandu, and the source of many colorful and imaginative legends.

Black Savant: Any of the mysterious inhabitants of the isle of Nefaratus; in popular conception, a race of diabolists.

Bodor: An amber-skinned, portly race of humanoids renowned as traveling musicians. A people displaced by the Great Disaster (q.v.).

Caduceus: Magic wand and symbol of the Dracartan thaumaturges. The caduceus is utilized in all thaumaturgic operations entailing the use of quintessence (q.v.).

Chana Witchmen/Witchwomen: Primitive inhabitants of the Jungles of Chana, and practitioners of various, grisly necromantic rituals.

Cral: Mercantile ruler and despot of Faradun.

Cymrilian: A citizen of Cymril, erstwhile capitol of the Seven Kingdoms. A green-skinned and green-haired people, the Cymrilians are enamored of all things magical.

Da-Khar: A type of hide gauntlet equipped with

retractable claws. Da-Khar are favored by the Torquar (q.v.) of Raj. Danuvian: A citizen of the City State of Danuvia. Male Danuvians are typically weak and slack-witted; quite the opposite of the females, who are renowned as swordswomen, military tacticians and administrators.

Darkling: Any of a race of vile, skulking humanoids native to the Darklands of Urag.

Deadman: A rare species of plant, the deathly pale leaves of which exude a lethal contact poison.

Demon: Any of several species of extra-dimensional entities originating from the lower plane of Cthonia. Categorized as quasi-elementals by many Talislantan scholars, the most commonly-known demon types include Earth Demons, Frost Demons, Night Demons, Sand Demons, Sea Demons, Swamp Demons, and Wind Demons.

Devil: Any of several species of extra-dimensional beings originating from the lower planes of existence. The most commonly known types include the Shaitan, Enim and Sardonicus (q.v.).

Devilroot: A rare species of plant with blue-black, "horned" leaves. The root of the plant, when dried and prepared in the proper fashion, yields a virulent toxin which is much favored for use by assassins.

Dhuna: A people related to the Sarista, reputed to have an obsessive interest in witchcraft. The kiss of a Dhuna witchwoman is credited in popular belief with the ability to enslave a man's heart.

Djaffir: A nomadic people native to the desert kingdom of Djaffa and its surrounding environs. The Djaffir population is divided into two main tribes: Merchants and Bandits. Critics maintain that distinctions between the two are minimal at best.

D'Oko: A large species of plant found only in the Rain Forests of the Dark Coast. The Green Men (q.v.) dwell within the D'Oko's hollow bole and protect the plant from harm, an arrangement constituting a unique form of symbiotic relationship.

Dracartan: A civilian of the desert kingdom of Carantheum, descended from the nomadic people of the same name.

Draconid: A diminutive species of pseudo-dragon native to the Volcanic Hills region. The Draconid's bite is poisonous.

Dractyl: A winged and ungainly species of reptilian native to the bleak land of Harak. The Harkin tribes utilize Dractyl as steeds, a situation dictated by need rather than choice.

Dragon: There are several species of Dragon native to the continent, including the ponderous Land Dragon, the aquatic Sea Dragon, the multi-headed Kaliya (or Black Dragon) and the giant Crested Dragon. With the possible exception of Land Dragons, the

various species of Talislantan Dragon show a marked propensity for cunning, and even devious, behavior. Some few are believed to possess innate magical abilities, the Crested Dragon in particular.

Druhk: A tribe of primitive humanoids native to the mountainous regions of Arim, notable for their bloodthirsty and excessively violent tendencies.

Enim: A race of giant Devils (q.v.), some few of which are known to inhabit the Barrens and other sectors of the Wilderlands of Zaran. They enjoy violent sport and have a weakness for games of chance, gold and man-flesh.

Equs: A species of quadrupedal beasts found throughout various parts of the continent. Known subspecies include the cold-dwelling Snowmane, the swift Silvermane, the Greymane (much-valued for use as durable and loyal steeds) and the bestial Darkmane.

Exarch: Hereditary monarch of the Arimites, who dwells in seclusion within the walls of the Forbidden City of Ahrazad.

Farad: A citizen of Faradun. In Djaffa, the term carries unfavorable connotations, both literally and figuratively.

Ferran: A species of feral humanoids native to the Wilderlands of Zaran. Ferrans live in underground tunnels, coming forth at dusk to scavenge for food or steal from unwary travelers.

Frostwere: An arctic species of Yaksha (q.v.), known to inhabit frozen tundra and high mountain ranges. Occasionally mistaken for Frost Demons by less-than-expert observers.

Gao-Din: A rocky isle situated off the southern coast of Mog; formerly a penal colony of the ancient Phaedran Dynasty, now home to the Rogue City of Gao.

Gnomekin: A race of smallish, brown-skinned humanoids native to the subterranean caverns and grottos of Durne.

Great Disaster: A cataclysmic occurrence—perhaps the inadvertent result of the Mad Wizard Rodinn's misguided attempts to concoct quintessence—which laid waste to much of the continent and brought to ruin the first great civilizations of Talislanta. The results of the Great Disaster are still in evidence throughout the Wilderlands of Zaran, a vast region littered with ruined cities and bizarre topographical and climatic anomalies.

Green Men: A race of diminutive plant people native to the Western Rain Forests of the Dark Coast. Peaceful symbionts, the Green Men live in complete harmony with their surroundings, and possess the ability to communicate with and influence all types of plant life.

Greymane: See Equs.

Gryph: A race of avian-humanoids native to the forests of Tamaranth. They are aggressive protectors of their woodland home, and friends to the Ariane (q.v.).

Hadjin: A citizen of the City State of Hadj. The Hadjin are among the wealthiest folk in Talislanta, and consider themselves superior to the “common” people of other lands.

Harakin: A nomadic and warlike race native to the bleak and uninviting region known as Harak. Conditioned to withstand hardship, they are perhaps the ultimate survivalists.

Hierophant: High Priest of the Orthodoxist cult (q.v.) and ruler of Aaman.

Ice Giant: Monstrous humanoids whose bodies are comprised of magically animate ice. They dwell within the frozen expanses of Narandu.

Ice King: Mysterious ruler of the Ice Giants, purportedly a warlock of great power.

Ikshada: A species of armored parasites measuring up to twelve inches in length. There are three distinct sub-species: the tree-dwelling Yellow Ikshada, the aquatic Grey Ikshada, and the Black Ikshada, which haunts subterranean caverns and crypts.

Imrian: A race of brutish, amphibious humanoids native to the island of Imria. They travel the seas in coracles drawn by teams of Kra (q.v.), preying on the primitive peoples of the Azure Ocean region, whom they capture and sell as slaves.

Ironshrike: Smaller relative of the Shrieker (q.v.). Ironshrikes prey upon Ikshada, whose sting has no effect upon these metal-plumed avians.

Jabutu: A rare tropical plant found only in the Jungles of Chana. A derivative of the plant is used in the making of Kesh, a potent elixir with uncanny properties (q.v.).

Jaka: A race of furred humanoids native to the Brown Hills of Yrmania. They possess a type of sixth sense, and are skilled trackers and manhunters.

Jamba: Unknowable patron deity of the Dracartans, to whom Jamba supposedly gave the secrets of the Lost Art of Thaumaturgy.

Juju: An undead fetish-creature created through the use of Black Magic. A zombie, controlled by manipulation of a graven image.

Kabros: Legendary sorcerer-king of ancient Phaendra, renowned as the author of numerous cogent spells and insightful treatises on inter-dimensional travel. Considered a visionary, particularly after his timely escape from Phaendra just prior to the fall of the old dynasty.

Kaliya: See Dragon.

Kang: A warlike, crimson-skinned race, now fawning servitors of the Quan (q.v.).

Kasmir: A citizen of the desert kingdom of

Kasmir. The shrivel-skinned Kasmir bear a reputation as shrewd money lenders and appraisers.

Kesh: A pungent liquid made from the root of the Jabutu plant. According to the quantity consumed, drinkers of Kesh claim to be capable of detecting invisible and spirit presences, to see into other planes of existence, or to actually enter other dimensions. The substance has potent hallucinogenic properties, which perhaps goes far to explain the claims of its users.

Khadun: Necromantic high priest and ruler of Raj. The Khadun is viewed as an earthly manifestation of Death by his morbid followers, who willingly serve him without question.

Khu: A double-bladed dagger used by the Harakin tribes.

Krin: A heavy, black iron crossbow employed by the Harakin tribes. The Krin uses hammered iron spikes as ammunition, and is a cumbersome and unwieldy weapon.

K'tallah: A potent narcotic substance which bestows upon the user the ability to see into the future. K'tallah is in wide use in Raj and, to a lesser extent, Faradun. It is highly addictive.

Lurker: Colloquial term for Sea Demon.

Mandalan: A race of passive, golden-skinned humanoids conquered and enslaved by the Quan (q.v.).
Mandragore: A species of insidious plant-creatures native to the forests of Werewood.

Mangar Corsair: Piratical denizens of the Mangars, a cluster of small islands situated in the Crescent Isles. The term applies as well to individuals of other races who, by choice or coercion, have joined up with the Corsairs.

Mangonel Lizard: A species of large reptile similar in some respects to Land Lizards, but having a muscular tail tipped with a rock-hard knob of bone and cartilage. The Mangonel Lizard's tail is an effective deterrent to predators, and is similarly employed in the creature's combative mating rituals.

Manik: Insane and chaotic patron deity of the Wildmen of Yrmania, whose bizarre behavior possibly reflects an attempt to emulate the purported nature of Manik himself.

Manra: A race of primitive humanoids native to the northern region of Chana. The Manra are shape-changers, possessing the ability to adopt the physical semblances of other lifeforms.

Maruk: A citizen of the Independent City State of Maruk. Victims of an age-old curse, the Maruk are widely regarded as harbingers of gloom and ill fortune, and accordingly are shunned by the more superstitious peoples of Talislanta.

Matsu: A type of long-handled warclub favored by the Ahazu tribes of the Dark Coast.

Megalodont: A giant, six-legged reptilian, native to the Plains of Golarin and parts of Urag and the Wilderlands. Megalodonts are herbivorous, and travel in herds of up to a hundred or more individuals. A stampeding Megalodont herd is a thing to be avoided at all costs.

Mirin: A race of blue-skinned humanoids native to the snowfields of LHann. The Mirin dwell in ice castles, and are ruled by the Snow Queen, a White Witch of great power.

Mogroth: A ponderous race of sloth-like humanoids native to the swamplands of Mog. In popular usage, the term has come to mean "slow," "dull-witted," or "dense."

Monolith: A race of mountainous beings whose bodies are comprised entirely of earth and stone. Monoliths dwell on the island of Garganta in the Thaecian Isle chain, and may be the oldest living things in Talislanta.

Morphius: A parasitic plant found in swamps, marshes and lowlands. The deep blue blossoms of the Morphius exude a fragrance which induces sleep.

Mud People: A race of six-limbed, amphibious humanoids native to the Dark Coast. The Mud People live in above-ground tunnel-complexes constructed of sodden earth and mud (hence their name).

Muse: A race of butterfly-winged, nymph-like humanoids native to the sylvan glades of Astar. Muses are empaths, notable as artisans of superior skill and utterly lax work habits.

Muskront: Shaggy-haired relative of the Ogriphat (q.v.), hunted for its pungent musk and hide. Muskronts are foul-tempered, and dangerous when aroused to anger.

Na-Ku: A race of indigo blue-skinned pseudo-demons native to the island of Pana-Ku, of the Crescent Isles chain. Their ruler is a horrible half-demon, fattened on prisoners captured by the Na-Ku, who are cannibalistic by nature.

Nagra: A race of primitive, frightful-looking humanoids native to the Jade Mountains and surrounding areas. The Nagra are renowned as spirit-trackers, possessing the uncanny ability to follow the faint spirit emanations of living creatures.

Necron: Legendary "City of the Dead" in Khazad, where it is said that an entire city and its population is interred below the ground.

Nightstalker: Fearsome denizens of the Astral Plane, who invade the dreams and nightmares of living creatures, seeking to slay victims by devouring their astral forms.

Nocturnal Strangler: A mysterious, invisible creature rumored to inhabit Urag, Arim, and other neighboring locales. Oc: A peculiar type of barbed bolas

employed by Imrian slavers in order to capture prey.

Ogriphat: A species of massive, quadrupedal herbivores native to the western regions of Talislanta. Domesticated in some lands, Ogriphat are used as burden beasts, and to help clear forest or jungle land. Wild Ogriphat are hunted for their tusks.

Ogront: Ogronts are gigantic herbivores, towering over even the largest Megalodonts (q.v.). Practically mindless, these immense beasts are impervious to harm, and pose an incidental danger to outpost settlements and farms located in near proximity to their grazing and breeding grounds.

Omnival: Traditional name for the Orthodoxist cult's "Books of the Law;" a listing of acceptable customs, behaviorisms, modes of thought, proscriptions against infidels, and related cult doctrines.

Orthodoxist: A practitioner of Orthodoxy the severe state religion of Aaman.

Paradoxist: A practitioner of Paradoxy, a quasi-mystical doctrine popular in the land of Zandu.

Phantasian: A race of tall, thin humanoids native to the isle of Phantas. The Phantasians are renowned as minor magicians and sellers of Dream Essence, the purported "stuff which dreams are made of."

Quan: Technically, any citizen of the Kang Empire. The term is more accurately used to describe the race of formerly barbaric humanoids who once ruled the Empire, known as the Quan.

Quintessence: A crystalline powder derived by thaumaturgic techniques, and having profound magical properties. Rahastran: A race of wandering seers and mountebanks, skilled in the use of the Zodar, a card game used to divine the future.

Rajan: A saturnine race of humanoids; civilians of the Desert Kingdom of Raj. The Rajans serve their ruler, the Khadun, whom they revere as the earthly manifestation of the dread entity Death.

Raknid: A vile species of insectoids thought to be a hybrid of demon and giant scorpion, known to inhabit the Volcanic Hills region. An aquatic species, the Water Raknid, is also known to exist.

Revenant: Member of a secret society of assassins which operates freely in the land of Arim.

Rodinn: Legendary "Mad Wizard" of ancient times, whose ill-advised magical experiments inadvertently led to the creation of the Aberrant Forest, and may well have caused that singular catastrophe known in Talislantan history as the Great Disaster.

R'ruh: A sharp-edged stone disc affixed to a leather thong and employed as an axe and missile weapon by the Wildmen tribes of Yrmania.

Sardonicus: A vile species of imp-like minor devils favored as familiars and advisors by black magicians; also known as "bottle-imps."

Sarista: A dark-skinned race of gypsy people native to the woodlands of Silvanus. The Sarista bear a richly-deserved reputation as incorrigible thieves, con-men and charlatans.

Sauran: A species of large, reptilian humanoids native to the Volcanic Hills region. The Saurans are a warlike race, who have domesticated the monstrous creatures known as Land Dragons, which they employ in battle as living siege engines.

Saurud: A species of reptilian humanoid related to the Saurans (q.v.), but being more massive of build and generally slower-moving.

Sawila: A species of translucent-skinned albinoids native to the island of Fahn in the Crescent Isles chain. The Sawila are spell-weavers, skilled in the art of casting enchantments by the use of intricate songs.

Scourge: A type of giant siege engine employed by the Ur clans of Urug (q.v.), consisting of a thirty-foot rotating spindle, to which are affixed rows of spikes, rasps, scything blades and ball-tipped chains. A team of slaves operating winches sets the scourge in motion, the movement of its wheels causing the spindle to revolve with great force.

Shadinn: A race of giant humanoids related to the Rajans (q.v.).

Shadow Wizard: Spectral denizens of the Shadow Realm, rumored to be black magicians of terrible power. Most live in the Iron Citadel, an eerie structure surmounted by towers equipped with enchanted orbs of carved onyx.

Shaitan: A species of giant devils cast out from the heavens and consigned to dwell in a brass city situated amidst the lower plane of Oblivion. Their ruler, Diabolus, is a master of the Black Arts, and a creature purported to be horrible to behold.

Shrieker: A species of fierce, avian predators native to the Cerulean Forest of Quan and surrounding environs. Shriekers have metallic feathers, razor-sharp claws and long, pointed beaks; the latter, used to spear prey by diving down from the treetops.

Silvermane: See Equis.

Sindaran: A race of thin, seven-foot tall humanoids native to the mesalands of Sindar. The Sindarans are dual-encephalons; "double-brained" beings possessed of exceptional intellectual capabilities.

Skoryx: A type of alcoholic beverage favored by the folk of Sindar, among others. It is quite potent, but is most notable for its myriad and varying taste sensations, a quality derived from the use of rainbow lotus in the distillation process.

Smokk: An odd and ungainly species of flightless bird found only in certain parts of Urug. The Smokk possesses an uncanny talent for locating precious stones

and metals, and as such is highly valued by prospectors and adventurers.

Snipe: A species of intelligent (and insatiably curious) mollusk native to the Sinking Land. The Snipe is able to pass swiftly through the mud and sludge of its homeland as a fish swims through the water; a useful ability when spying on other creatures or fleeing from voracious predators.

Snowmane: See Equis.

Strider: A species of large, bi-pedal predator resembling a cross between reptile and flightless bird. The Kang (q.v.) employ trained Striders as warsteeds; in the wild, the creatures are vicious, and prone to mad attacks. A swamp-dwelling species, the Marsh Strider, is also known to exist.

Sunra: A race of silvery-skinned, semi-aquatic humanoids; subjects of the Quan (q.v.). The Sunra live in the Coral City of Isalis, build magnificent Dragon Barques, and are the most skilled navigators on the continent.

Stryx: A race of foul avian humanoids native to the Obsidian Mountains and other areas in Urug. The Stryx are carrion-eaters, who scavenge battlefields and burial mounds for food.

Tantalus: A leafy plant, the heart-shaped root of which is dried and crushed to obtain a powder (also called Tantalus) reputed to have aphrodisiac properties.

Tarak: A heavy, four-bladed iron axe employed by the Harakin tribes (q.v.).

Tarkus: A species of murderous, quadrupedal carnivores; possibly a sorcerous hybrid of mangonel lizard, raknid and Tundra Beast (q.v.). The Kang (q.v.) of Quan use trained Tarkus as hunting beasts.

Thaesian: A tall, slender and graceful people native to the isle of Thaeccia. The Thaeccians are skilled in the arts of Enchantment, and create many wondrous products and wares.

Thrall: A race of giant albinoids bred specifically for use as an army of slave warriors by the sorcerers of some ancient, and now forgotten, land. It is the practice of the Thralls to cover their bodies from head to foot with colorful and elaborate tattoos, this as a means of expressing individuality; aside from differences in gender, all Thralls would otherwise look exactly alike.

Tirshata: Fabled-and possibly mythical-future savior and ruler of the Za bandit tribes (q.v.).

Torquar: A secret society of torturers, assassins and terrorists, sworn to serve the Khadun of Raj.

Trans-Ascendancy: A system of metaphysical theorems and beliefs adhered to by the Ariane (q.v.), who believe that all creatures and things are animate, incarnating entities.

Trivarian: A complex game favored by the dual-encephalons of Sindar, but quite incomprehensible to non-Sindarans. **Tundra Beast:** A particularly fierce, two-headed species of quadrupedal carnivore native to the northern regions of Talislanta.

Ur: A massive and malformed species of humanoid native to the wilds of Urag, having yellow-green skin, curved fangs and brutish features. The Ur clans dwell in rude stone fortresses and build giant siege engines, which they use in battle against their foes and rivals.

Vajra: A species of stout, subterranean humanoids whose sturdy frames are covered with rows of overlapping, scaly plates; subjects of the Quan (q.v.). The Vajra are renowned as skilled builders and engineers.

Vird: A mongrel race related to the Rajans (q.v.). Colloquially the word serves as the basis for numerous derogatory remarks: "son of a Vird," "mother of a Vird," and so forth.

Vorl: An insidious species of beings whose bodies are comprised entirely of animate mists and vapors. Vorls subsist on the vital fluids of living creatures, which they drain by enveloping victims in their trailing, wispy forms.

Watchstone: A massive pinnacle of stone, carved into the face of which is a long, winding stairway. From the summit, one can see across the whole of Golarin. The obelisk-like structure is of some significance to the Orthodoxists of Aaman.

Weirdling: A nearly extinct race of diminutive, gnarled humanoids native to the dreary forests of Werewood. According to legend, a captured Weirdling must either yield its treasure-horde or grant its captor a wish (hence the popular name, "wish-gnomes").

Well of Saints: A magical well located in the Valley of Mists. Water from the Well of Saints is said to possess remarkable healing properties. The well is of significance to the Orthodoxists of Aaman (q.v.), as well as other, lesser-known religions. Some claim that a magical being or monster lives deep within the well, warding the enchanted waters from any who dare take more than the single, allotted sip.

Whisp: A diminutive species of pseudo-elementals native to various woodland and wilderland regions. Whisps are said to know magic of the most ancient sort, and can be both mischievous and cruel.

Whisperweed: A variety of wild grass which quite mysteriously-whispers strange secrets when blown in the breeze.

Wildmen: A race of ape-like humanoids native to the Badlands of Yrmania. Ritual ingestion of death's angel, a toxic variety of mushroom, has rendered the primitive tribes quite insane.

Xambrian: Members of an advanced and peaceful people all but exterminated by the Torquarans, a race of black magicians and diabolists extant during ancient times. Descendants of the few surviving Xambrians typically work as wizard hunters, tracking down reincarnated Torquarans and bringing them to justice.

Xanadas: Fabled High Mystic and Master of a legendary group of hermits and savants, who left his followers to "visit with the Gods." His faithful followers (or, more likely, their descendants) continue to await the promised return of Xanadas, keeping safe his old dwelling place in the Temple of the Seven Moons.

Yaksha: A species of giant, bi-pedal carnivores native to the mountains of Arim and neighboring territories. Deemed the fiercest of Talislantan creatures, Yaksha are notably devoid of fear or reason, and have no natural enemies.

Yellow Aqueor: A variety of aquatic plant, similar to sea-kelp, which grows to immense size. The plant has many practical uses, and is a staple crop of the Sea Nomads of Oceanus.

Yitek: A race of tall, sombre humanoids native to the Wilderlands of Zaran and surrounding areas. A nomadic people, the Yitek earn a living as tomb robbers, a profession which endears them to few other Talislantans.

Za: A race of malign, nomadic humanoids native to the Wilderlands of Zaran. The Za bandit clans bear a reputation as blood-thirsty killers, and are held in low esteem throughout much of the continent.

Zagir: A race of wiry, dark-skinned humanoids related to the Rajans (q.v.).

Zandir: A citizen of Zandu. Elsewhere, a derogatory term meaning "philanderer," "cuckold," and so on.

Zaratan: A species of huge, aquatic reptilians native to the southern seas of Talislanta. Normally docile, Zaratan are the enemies of Sea Dragons and other large marine predators. The species has been domesticated by the Sea Nomads of Oceanus, who employ them as waterborne steeds and burden beasts.

COMMENTATOR BIOS

QUENDIFAN MERDIGAL

Cymrilian Professor

Quendifan, Quen for short, has been senior professor of southern cultures at the Lyceum Arcanum in Cymril for the past 14 years. Quen has travelled Talislanta extensively and is widely published including his controversial treatise on the Batreans. Quen is an outspoken professor and his opinions are not always shared by the administration at the Lyceum.

ARDAB YAKYR

Arimite Black Iron Merchant

Ardab has been in the black iron business for more than 12 years and frequently travels the western lands from Silvanus to Aaman and even into Jhangara. He frequently deals in information as well as black iron and many believe him to be an agent of the Revenant cult.

JALAL IBN MAHOOD

Djaffir Merchant

Like most Djaffir, Jalal has made of life of travelling from realm to realm buying and selling various merchandise. Jalal spent many years trading arms and armor with the Quan Empire through several factors and intermediaries in Hadran and Shonan. With the instability following the Quiet Insurrection, Jalal turned his mercantile attentions to the Wilderlands City-States but also travels frequently to Cymril, Kasmir and Tarun.

M'TARA JAMAL

Dracartan Thaumaturge

Struck with a wanderlust in his early 20's, M'Tara eventually entered the employ of a noble of the Quan Empire back in the year 609 NA. Finding himself in an exciting place in an exciting time, he remained in the Empire throughout the Silent Insurrection and later, the Kang Civil War. He is currently the personal Thaumaturge to Warlord Rakshan of the Kang Empire and resides in Jacinth.

GRAY WALKER

Ariane Seeker

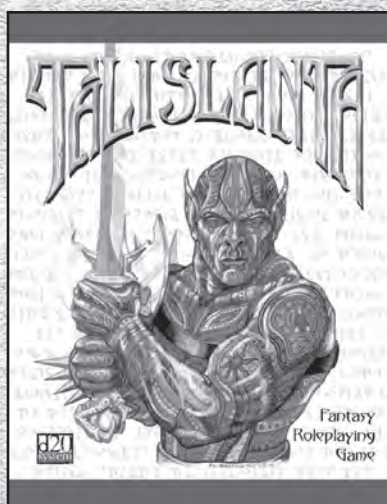
The Gray Walker is an ever-inquisitive wanderer and explorer. In Maruk he is known as the Wandering Prophet, in Arim as Gray Whisper, and in Silvanus as Staff Walker. He has traveled by foot across all of Talislanta, and possesses an uncanny knack for putting himself in harm's way in his search for knowledge.

DOLORON

Horned Devil-Man Trader

An exile from the lower planes, Doloron ekes out a meager existence as a trader in fetishes, slaves, juju zombies, and other sordid merchandise throughout the Far Seas. He spends most of his time travelling the Far Seas islands and the southern coast of Talislanta. Doloron has been a guest lecturer at the Lyceum Arcanum on a number of occasions.

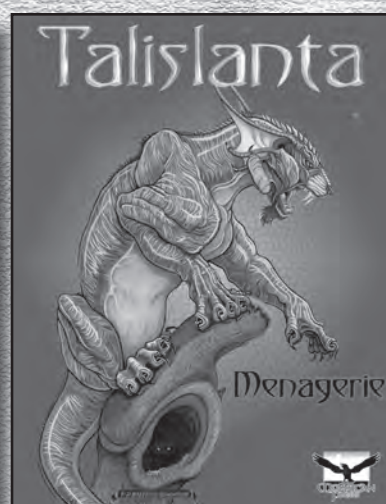
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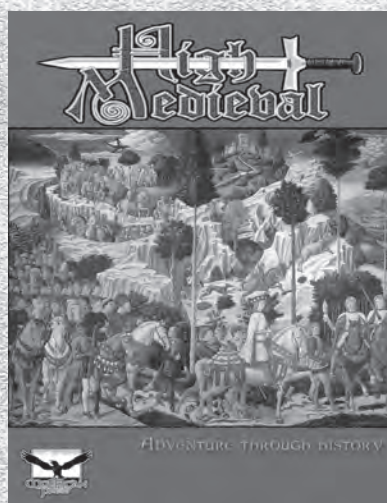
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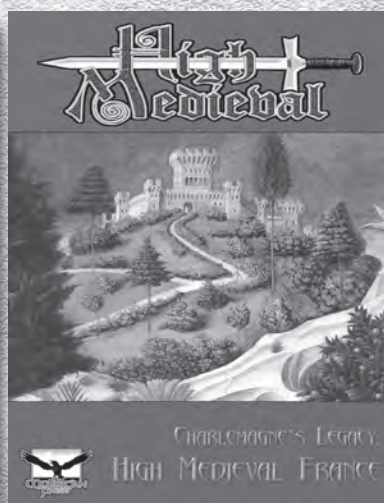
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